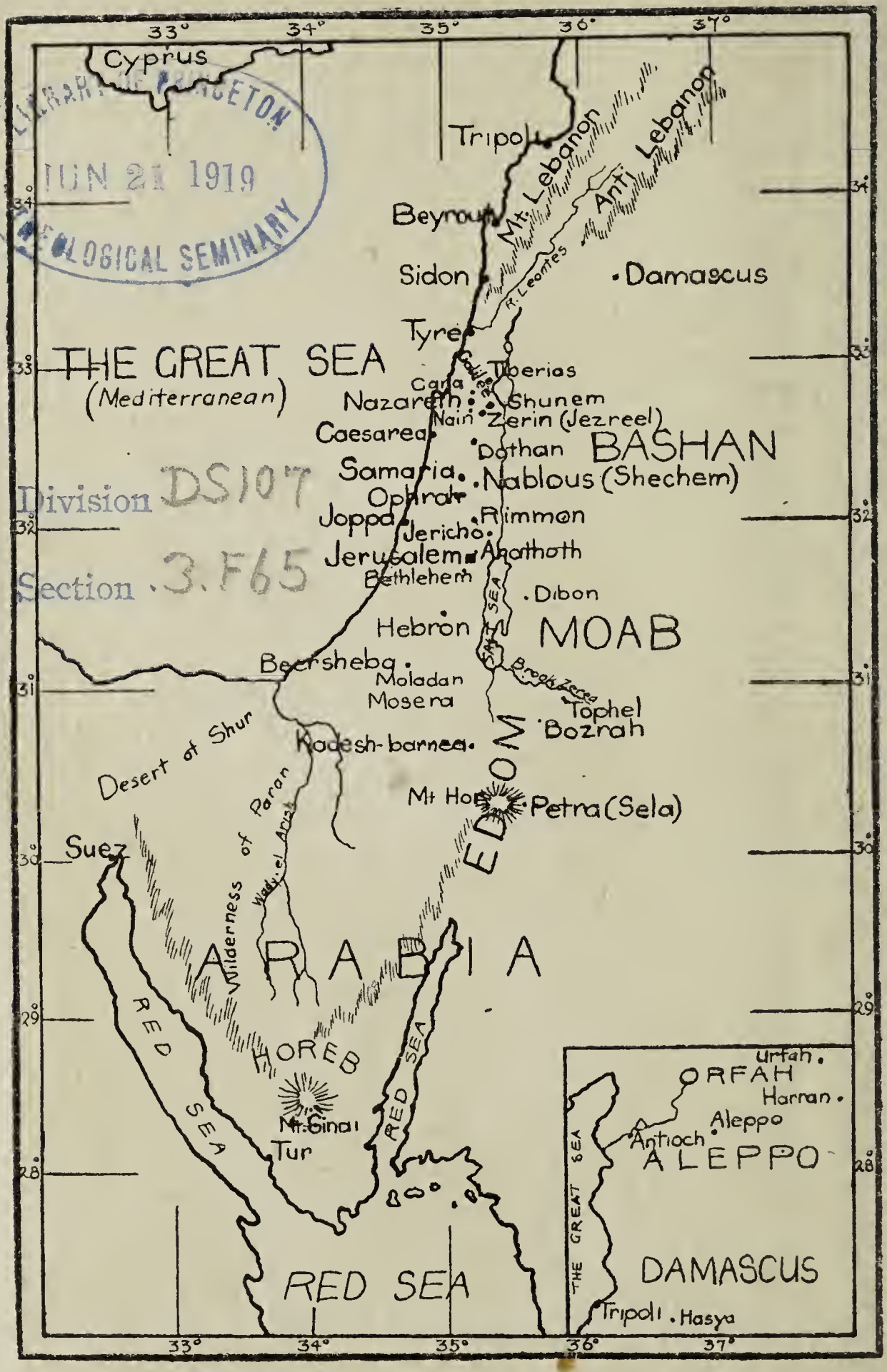
In And About Palestine

by

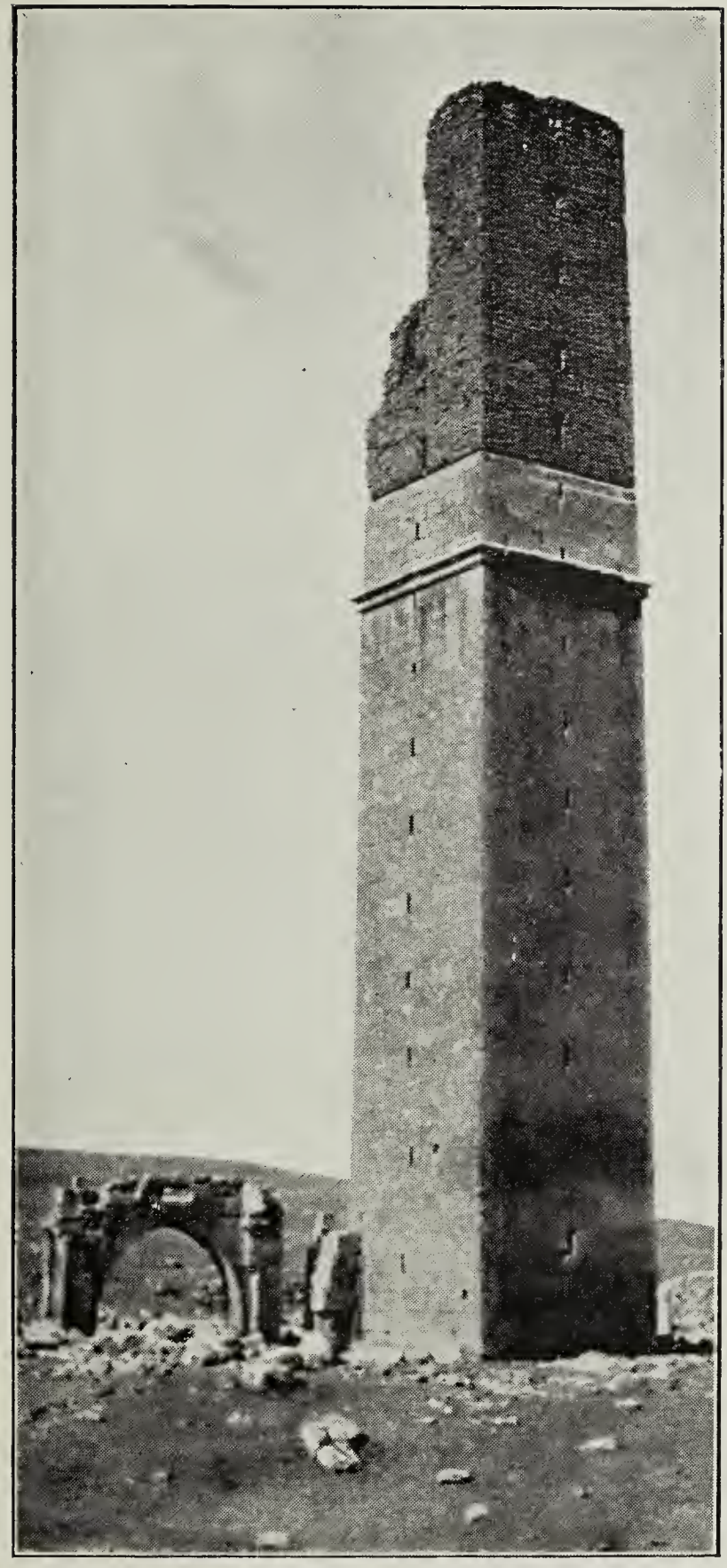
Archibald Forder



IN AND ABOUT PALESTINE
WITH NOTEBOOK AND CAMERA

The writer of these pages, the Rev. Archibald Forder, was interned in Damascus. According to The Times *correspondent, Mr. Forder was treated as a common felon for two years, and was then sent to Damascus on parole. These pages were already in type when our troops entered Damascus and found Mr. Forder ill in hospital. For many years he has lived in Jerusalem, making that city his headquarters and starting-point for journeys throughout Palestine and Syria, and the northern portion of Arabia. In these papers he has fixed the impressions made on his keen mind and on the sensitive plates in his camera.*

Of course, starting on his many journeys from one place necessitated occasionally going over the same ground more than once; yet where repetition occurs in these pages it will be found that the writer has always something fresh to describe, some new feature of historical interest that had not previously come to his notice.



BELFRY OF AN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT HARAN, 125 FEET HIGH. (CHAPTER VII)

A WOMAN OF SINAI. (CHAPTER VIII)

IN AND ABOUT PALESTINE

WITH NOTEBOOK AND CAMERA

BY

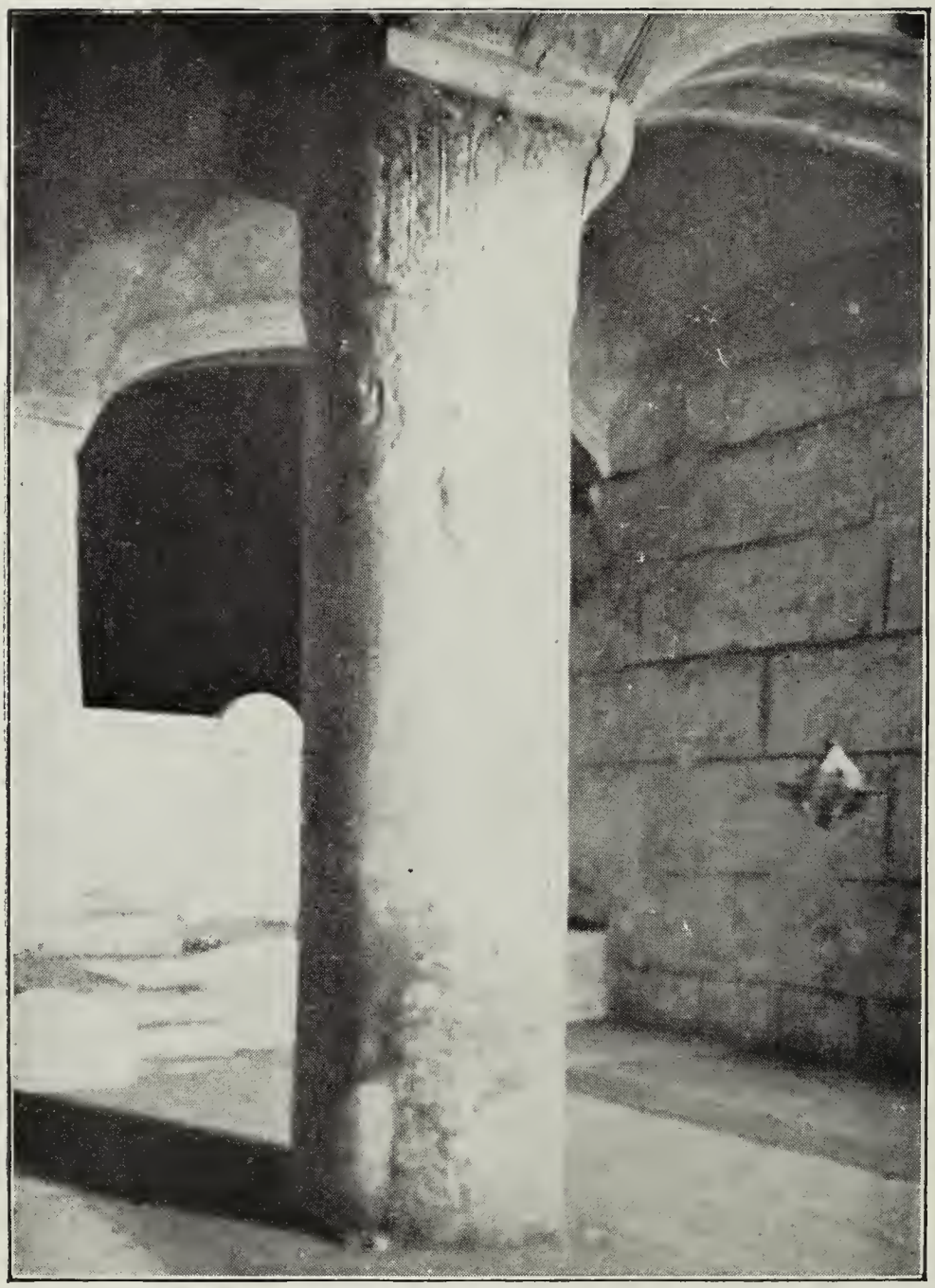
ARCHIBALD FORDER

SECOND IMPRESSION

This urn crowns the summit of a rock-hewn temple at Petra, and is part of the same rock.

R.T.S., 4 Bouverie Street, London, E.C. 4

1919



ANCIENT MASSIVE PILLAR UNDER THE MOSQUE-EL-AKSA IN JERUSALEM. (CHAPTER III)

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IN AND ABOUT PALESTINE

I

ROUND ABOUT JERUSALEM

"Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together."—PSALM cxxii. 3.

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces."—PSALM xlviii. 12, 13.

PROBABLY no city in Bible-lands is built so compactly as is Jerusalem, and to encompass it is an easy matter, provided you are willing for a walk of about two miles. Keeping close under the walls of the city, that would be about the distance traversed.

For those unable to visit the City of Cities, this paper will tell what it is to "walk about Zion" or "go round about her." In the walls are seven gates open day and night—"Thy gates shall be open continually" (Isa. lx. 11) —from any of which a start can be made.

For this trip let us start from the exit on the south side, known as David's Gate, because of its nearness to the tomb of David. This is the only gate of importance on this side of the city. According to an inscription it was built about 1540 A.D. From the top of the wall over the gateway a fine view of the mountains of Moab is obtainable.

Before turning to the left, two places claim attention, which might easily be passed, so completely are they out of sight. Nearly opposite the gate is a high wall, which encloses an Armenian monastery. In this tradition has located the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, in the courtyard of which Peter denied the Lord. The monks in charge are always ready to show visitors the courtyard, which is kept scrupulously clean and shaded by a very old grape-vine. Behind the monastery, and now surrounded by modern buildings, is the tomb of David, and in the same building what is of more interest, viz. the room in which Christ ate the last supper with His disciples. The room as now seen is divided into two parts by columns in the middle. Half pillars with quaint capitals are built into the walls, and the ceiling consists of pointed vaulting. The room is no doubt a part of a Christian church of about

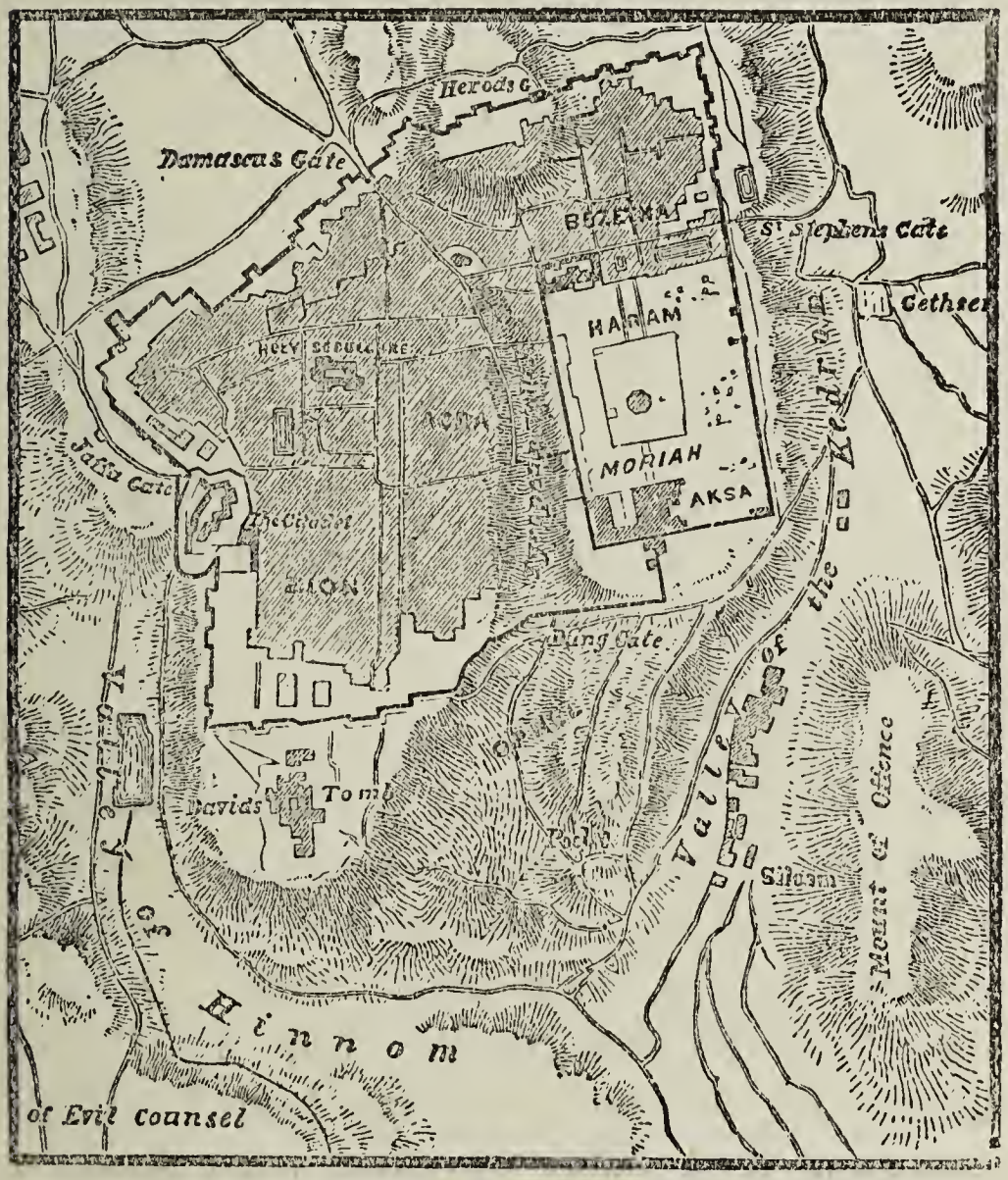
ABSALOM'S PILLAR IN THE VALLEY OF THE KEDRON.

A CORNER IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

JERUSALEM AS SEEN FROM THE BETHANY ROAD.

THE POOL OF HEZEKIAH.

the thirteenth century. If, as some believe, the city wall at the time of Christ extended beyond the present one to the spur of Zion,



PLAN OF JERUSALEM.

this chamber in some ways meets the requirements of the Gospels, for it is "a large upper room," and would have been "in the city." Whether the actual room or not, it serves a

good purpose, and keeps before the minds of all Christians the fact that hereabouts our Lord instituted a feast that has been faithfully observed for nearly two thousand years.

From David's tomb we return to the wall, and for some distance follow it until a small portal, believed to be the Dung Gate, is reached. This exit is small, and is only used by pedestrians, as no animal larger than a donkey can pass through it. We now leave the city wall for a time and descend a valley, which soon brings us to the Pool of Siloam, a place connected with one of our Saviour's miracles. The pool is evidently ancient, and at some time was probably arched over. The water that supplies the pool comes from a spring some distance away, being conducted through a channel cut in the rock. The water of Siloam is believed by the natives to possess wonderful curative powers, and people come or send from long distances for it. Fevers and eye diseases are supposed to become healed through treatment with water obtained from Siloam's Pool. Water-carriers take hundreds of skins of water up to the city and sell them at good prices. The gardens in the valley below are irrigated and watered from the overflow of the spring.

A stiff climb for about twenty minutes brings us again to the city wall, which at this part is of unusual interest. Here may be distinctly seen two styles of building, representing two periods in the occupation of Jerusalem. At the bottom are several courses of large, roughly hewn stones, put together without mortar or cement. These probably form a part of the wall of the time of Christ, and the sight of them, and others like them, caused the disciples to say, "Master, see what manner of stones are here."

Above these old stones are those of a more recent date, without doubt of Crusading times. These are carefully shaped and fitted, also much smaller, and laid in mortar of lime. This style of building continues until the south-east corner of the city. From this point a beautiful view of the entire length of Olivet is obtained, and one cannot fail to observe the thousands of flat stones that cover the slopes of the mountain. These mark the last resting-place of Jews who have been fortunate to die in and be buried near their beloved city. In the bed of the valley beneath are some prominent tombs hewn in the rock; they are of so little importance that they are let severely alone. One isolated monolith, however, must not be

overlooked, as it perpetuates the memory of Absalom, who, having turned his father, David, out of the city, set himself up as king.

Absalom had no son, and as we gaze upon this isolated, massive memorial, we are reminded again of the words in 2 Sam. xviii. 18: "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance, and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Absalom's monument unto this day" (R.V.). In this and other ways, as one walks about Jerusalem, the Old and New Testaments seem to revive in interest, with these visible remains of men and things so intimately connected with Scripture history.

Not far from the memorial of the rebellious son is the enclosure known as the Garden of Gethsemane, a place so often written about that it seems useless to repeat what it appears every one already knows. It is impossible to say definitely if these walls enclose the very garden in which our Saviour was arrested, but the cupidity of the Eastern Church has for a long time decided upon this place as the spot. It is safe to conclude, however, that it was not far from this place that the Lord agonized,

HALL OF CAIAPHAS.

DAVID'S GATE.

SOUTH WALL OF JERUSALEM.

THE ROOM IN WHICH TRADITION SAYS CHRIST ATE THE LAST SUPPER.

THE POOL OF SILOAM.

ST. STEPHEN'S GATE.

and "sweat as it were great drops of blood," and because of this the locality seems invested with more than a usual interest. It is good to turn aside for a short time, and in the seclusion of the garden ponder over what the redemption of man cost. From the garden the city wall in the near distance is plainly outlined on the horizon.

Higher up the Mount, and plainly seen from the path under the eastern wall, is a very plain building, the Church of the Paternoster. It is supposed to stand on the place where the disciples were taught what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Attached to the church is a sisterhood of nuns who, after their entrance into the convent, are never allowed to see the face of man. In the courtyard of the church it is interesting to find the Lord's Prayer printed on enamelled tiles and fixed into the walls. Thirty-three nations could read that prayer in their own language in the corridors of that garden. The Princess Latour d'Auvergne, a relative of Napoleon III, had this church built in 1868, and the inscribed tablets put in the walls. On the south side is a life-size effigy of the princess, and in a niche in the wall her heart is deposited in a red granite urn.

Coming down from the Mount and passing

the silent garden, a bit of steep road leads up to St. Stephen's Gate, the only exit on the east side of the city. Through this gate our Lord entered the city after His arrest in Gethsemane, and later, Stephen was stoned outside it, thus giving it its name. The masonry as now seen is Crusading, evidenced by the lions in relief on either side of the gate-posts.

From St. Stephen's Gate to the north-east corner of the wall there is a wide deep moat, now partly filled in by the débris and rubbish that has been deposited there for centuries. The surface is cultivated, cabbage and cauliflower being grown on it. When the peasant who rents this scrap of débris from the Government goes out with his plough to prepare the soil for sowing, we are again forcibly reminded of Scripture when it says, "Zion shall be plowed like a field" (Jer. xxvi. 18).

Turning due west, and following the carriage-road which runs directly along under the north wall, we soon reach the mound known as Gordon's Calvary. It is now walled in, and access is very difficult. For want of a better place, this hill meets all the requirements of the Gospel record. It is in deed and in truth "nigh to the city," and "without the gate,"

and, looked at from certain standpoints, in shape like a skull. Under the hill is a very large cave in which, tradition says, Jeremiah wrote the Lamentations. If the reader could climb the mound, he would see quite near, almost joining it, a garden, and in the garden a rock-hewn tomb. Being under the shadow of the now-accepted Calvary, many think that this rock-hewn sepulchre is the one in which the Saviour lay, and from which He arose. Be it so or not, it is preserved from destruction by being in the hands of an English committee, and until another tomb is discovered will hold its own in the minds of thousands as the actual grave of our Lord. It is to be regretted that no stone, rolling or otherwise, was found at the tomb just mentioned, as by these means all entrance to ancient tombs was barred. However, within a short distance of the city walls a fine rolling-stone may yet be seen at the series of rock-hewn chambers called the Tombs of the Kings. These tombs are entered through a low passage cut in the rocks. Before this, in a groove, is a large stone, about three feet six inches in diameter and fifteen inches thick. It requires the combined strength of two men to roll this heavy weight across the front or entrance to the chambers. It is impossible to

salem we must come down from the flat roof, with its iron railings, and traverse the narrow maze of streets that seem to lead nowhere in particular. The ever-changing crowds in the streets always interest both resident and tourist. The babel of tongues, variety of costumes, the shrill voices of vendors, and intermingling of man and beast, make up a picture not easily forgotten when once seen.

In Inner Jerusalem one does not seem to mind being run down by a donkey, or having one's suit rubbed by the greasy hide of a camel ; somehow it seems to be a part of the conditions of street life in the city. If space permitted, the street cries and vendors might be detailed with interest, but, for the present, larger things will claim attention.

The Temple area, with its many attractions, is the first and foremost sight of Inner Jerusalem, but that is to have a chapter to itself. It is not out of place here to speak of the many old fountains to be seen on the streets, many of them long since dry, and only of interest by reason of the elegant workmanship put into them. One of the finest of these is to be seen at the gate of the Temple area, known as Bab Silsilea. The inscription, which is well preserved, tells us that it was erected about eight

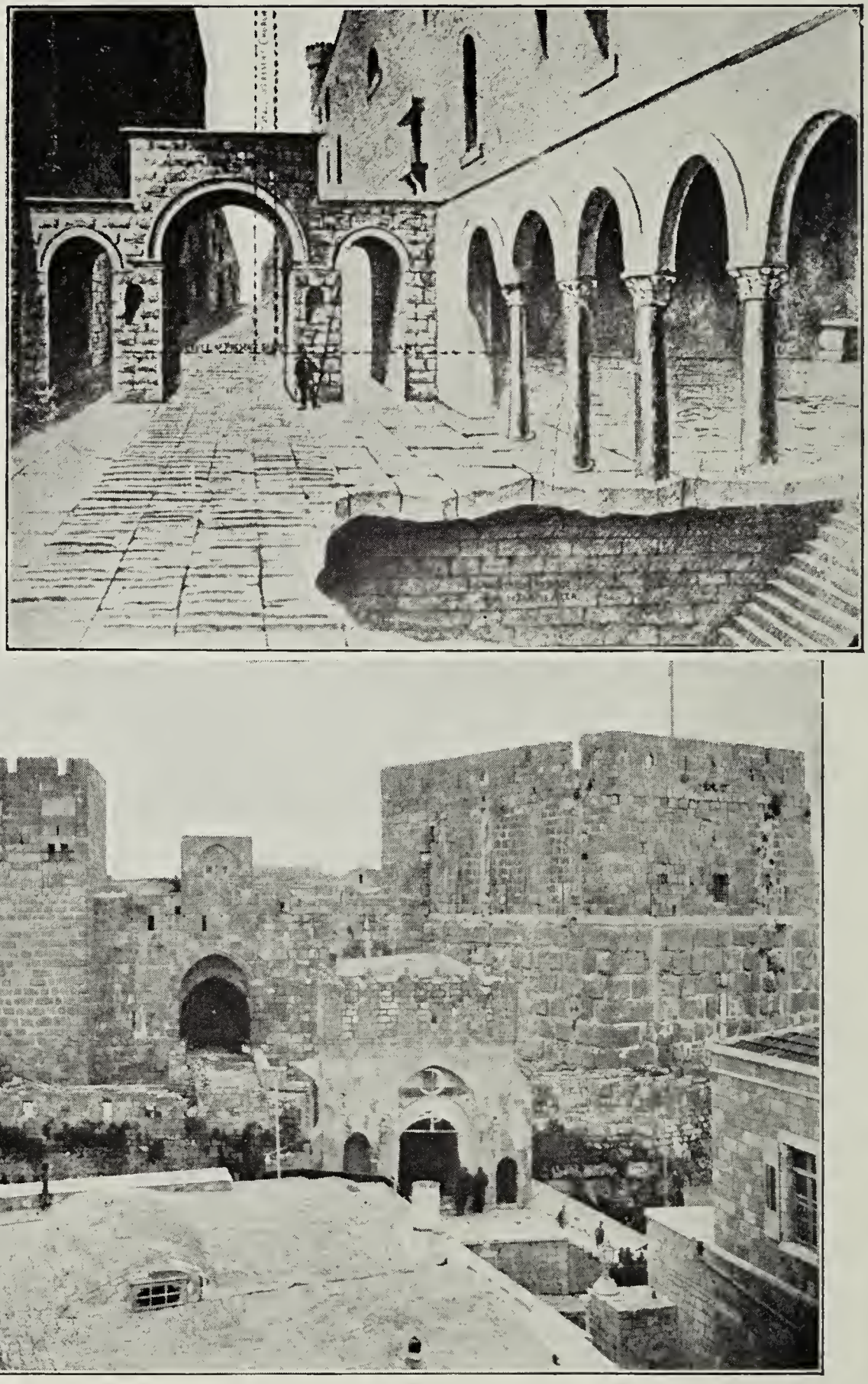
hundred years ago, and for centuries, as at the present time, it has been fed with water brought in pipes from Solomon's Pool, nine miles away. Strange to relate, no charge is made for water from this fountain, Jews and Gentiles alike sharing the privilege granted them by the Turkish Government.

Whilst writing about water it might be well to mention another of the sights inside the city, altogether different in construction from the one just named. The Pool of Hezekiah, hidden away and shut in by houses and shops in the north-west portion of the city, is not the only one of its kind within the walls, but is the only one capable of storing water in these days. It is about eighty yards long and forty-eight yards wide, and the bottom, which is rocky, lies ten feet below the level of the street, that runs quite near it. The water, which is surface, is used in some public baths near by. In summer it is stagnant, and makes an excellent breeding-place for mosquitoes. The construction of the pool is ascribed to King Hezekiah, but it is difficult to ascertain whether there is any foundation for the tradition. Josephus mentions it in his writings as the "tower-pool," no doubt because of its nearness to the Tower of David.

To those entering the city by the Jaffa Gate, or looking down on it from some elevation the massive solid towers on which flew the Turkish flag cannot fail to claim attention. For many centuries this has formed the stronghold of the city of Jerusalem. This mass of solid masonry is probably the place spoken of in 2 Sam. v. 6, 7, in which the Jebusites had entrenched themselves when David attacked the city: "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, the same is the city of David." David's Tower of to-day makes excellent barracks for the troops stationed in that part of the city. The moat that still exists on two sides of it, and the steep battlements on the west side, make it difficult of access, and visitors are only granted entrance as a special favour by the military officer on duty. It was from the tower on the right side of the picture that Mr. Sankey sang "Hold the Fort," when he visited Jerusalem. The stones used in the construction of these strongholds were very roughly hewn, and many of the courses visible even now must be of great antiquity. Many a man and woman has lingered long gazing at the massive blocks in the walls, and wondered how such unwieldy dead weights were raised to such a height and put into position.

MARKET-DAY IN JERUSALEM.

ONE OF THE OLD STREET FOUNTAINS IN JERUSALEM.



DRAWING SHOWING EXISTING REMAINS OF JERUSALEM AS IT WAS IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

THE TOWER OF DAVID, THE STRONGHOLD OF JERUSALEM.

These facts we are ignorant of, but count ourselves fortunate in being able to look upon the work of those whose duty it was to make a firm stronghold in the defence of Zion and Jerusalem.

Inside the city, churches both ancient and modern abound, some of them of interest, others not worth even a side glance. The Roman Catholic churches are the most gaudy, and on their interior decoration great sums have been spent. The latest addition to the many Catholic churches of the city is one near the new gate on the north side. It is known as the Chapelle de Marie Reparatrice, and was built entirely from the money given by one Italian gentleman, who stipulated that when the edifice was finished an order of nuns should be formed, whose sole duty should be that of always kneeling before the altar in the church, offering prayers for the salvation of Jerusalem. These devout, misguided women kneel in pairs for two hours at a time, repeating their petitions on behalf of the Holy City. It need hardly be said that the desire of the priests is that Jerusalem may be converted to Roman Catholicism. This unusual sight of continuous prayer, day and night, causes many a one to turn aside and watch for a while these women whose whole life is given to this object.

Another of the sights of Inner Jerusalem is that part of the outer wall of the Temple Area to which the Jews resort to lament the state of their nation, and the overrunning of their beloved city by the Gentiles. This place has so often been written about, that it seems superfluous to describe it here. Suffice to say that whereas it was only on Fridays that the Jews in any numbers went there, since the massacres in Russia and elsewhere, the Hebrews have gone every day to the Wailing-Place to implore God to have mercy on their brethren.

The old wall, with its worn stones, and blocks inscribed in Hebrew characters, is indeed one of the most genuine and interesting attractions of Inner Jerusalem, and it is indeed pitiful and touching to see both women and men kissing and rubbing the stones whilst they drawl out their lamentations for the condition of their people.

An old Rabbi informed the writer that on and off for eight hundred years the Jews had resorted to this place to weep, also that the Government called for no recompense for allowing them to do this; on the other hand, if any help or protection was needed at feast times or on unusual occasions, it was always readily granted.

The synagogues of Inner Jerusalem are, as may be expected, numerous and well attended. The three principal places of worship are very fine erections, and well worth a visit. Looking down on the city, the domes of these synagogues stand out in contrast to the other domes. In appearance the interiors are all alike. In the middle of each is a circular platform about three feet high, which is enclosed by a fine iron grating, which makes it look like a huge bird-cage. At service time the Rabbis and Scribes gather in this cage and read from the scroll the portion and prayers appointed for the day. In front of the cage is a recess carefully guarded by a velvet curtain, elaborately embroidered, in which the scrolls are kept when not in use. Wooden benches provide sitting accommodation for the old men, and the women are all relegated to a gallery. The synagogue reproduced in the illustration is that of the Ashkenazim Jews (German Jews), and is one of the best inside the walls. It may not be known to every reader that Jews worship with their heads covered, it being considered unseemly and a shame for a male to appear bareheaded.

Mention can only be made of one more place of interest in Inner Jerusalem, and so closely

is it connected with our Saviour's experiences, that it claims a visit from every follower of the Man of Galilee. The Place of the Pavement, or Pilate's Judgment-Hall, has of recent years been unearthed, and is now a part of the Convent of the Sisters of Zion. Excavation has exposed streets and pavements, courtyards and chambers, that for centuries have been buried under the dirt and débris of the city, until at last we have the privilege of looking on a bit of Jerusalem as it was in Christ's time. The picture shows the Ecce-Homo Arch, and the pavement as it would appear if all uncovered. Here, then, is without doubt the judgment-seat and pavement where Jesus and Pilate met and conversed. Under the present street and convent this pavement remains, and a part of an old arch spans the narrow street, on which it is believed Jesus was presented to the Jews, with the words, "Behold your king." The illustration shows—

1. The Roman street, grooved, to make it easy for animals to climb the hill.

2. A triple arch with a dotted line, 3, fixing the present street level.

4. Stairs leading down to a covered way by which, in case of disturbance in the Temple

Courts, troops could be sent to quiet the people (Acts xxi. 27-32).

5. Marks cut in the stones for games which the Roman soldiers played.

6. In the corner is the pedestal or prophet's stone from which Pilate probably addressed and argued with the excited Jews.

7. Upright dotted lines showing the section of the arches now built into the convent chapel.

These ancient and well-preserved remains show a part of the city which without doubt was the scene of Christ's final rejection by the Hebrews, and His condemnation by the Roman powers.

Enough has been written and shown to convince the reader that Inner Jerusalem is not without its attractions, which compensate in a very large measure for the smells and filth that are met at every turn of its narrow streets.

As long as the human race exists there will be those who will be interested in this City of Cities. It could only be wished that thousands even now had such a love for the city, that, like Isaiah of old, they would say, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteous-

ness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth" (Isa. lxii. 1, R.V.). . . . "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers take ye no rest, and keep not silence, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. lxii. 6, 7, R.V.).

III

THE TEMPLE AREA

OF the many sights in the Holy City, none is of more interest than the enclosure that for centuries witnessed the worship and ceremonial connected with God's ancient people. Whatever else is omitted, going over the mosque must not be, and a poor opinion is formed of any one who does not care to do so, or having done so, says, " I did not think much of it." Some " do it " in twenty minutes, others in an hour, but to see the Temple area properly requires about three hours.

Exclusive of any Biblical or secular historic interest attached to the place, there is sufficient in the manner of the buildings, the massive masonry, and elegant decoration to charm even the most disinterested of travellers; but when connected with all its wonderful history, no enclosure is more worthy of a visit.

The photographs reproduced in the illustrations will give some idea of what may be seen

both above and underground in the place which is most sacred to Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians alike.

The Temple area, called by the Moslems El Haram Eshereef, *i.e.* "the honourable sacred place," occupies the south-eastern corner of the city, and covers an area of about thirty-six acres, just about one-sixth of the entire space bounded by the walls of the city.

Jews will not enter the place for fear of treading under foot the law, which they believe is buried somewhere beneath the surface; Christians are only allowed inside when escorted by a *kawass* from the Consulate of the nation they represent, and a Turkish soldier, both of whom may be had for a small fee.[1] Nine gates afford entrance into the courts, but nearly all visitors enter by the covered way known as the Cotton Gate. As will be seen by the illustration, this miniature street is roofed in and has every appearance of antiquity. On either side are small square recesses which once served as shops, but are now filled with débris and rubbish. As this is the only covered way into the Temple Courts, it has been suggested that it was probably here that Christ turned out those that bought and sold, and it may also

[1] These pages were written before the war.

THE MOSQUE OF AKSA.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE TEMPLE AREA.

OLD COVERED STREET LEADING TO THE TEMPLE AREA AND CALLED BAB-EL-KETTAN.

be "the street of the house of God," in which Ezra gathered the people "because of the great rain" (Ezra x. 9). The large and much-worn blocks of stone, also many of the bevels on them, prove conclusively that the place was erected centuries ago.

On entering the gate the great octagonal building commonly called the Mosque of Omar looms up before us. The proper name of this building is the Dome of the Rock, because it covers the rock believed to be the top of Mount Moriah. Turning to the left, a flight of steps lead up to the platform on which this elegant building stands. Scattered about the lower platform are numerous fountains, tombs, and praying-places, each associated with some celebrity or tradition of Mohammedan lore.

The Dome of the Rock is a large and handsome octagon. Each side is about sixty-six feet in length, and is covered as far as the window-sills with variegated porcelain tiles, and lower down with marble slabs. Four gates lead into the sacred edifice, and visitors always enter by the East Gate; before doing so they must remove their boots or put on overalls, for fear of polluting the holy place.

On entering, there is at first a slight feeling of disappointment, but as the eyes become

accustomed to the soft, dull light, the beauty and unrivalled splendour of the place is gradually realized. The delicate and intricate mosaics that adorn the roof, intermixed with designs in gold and bright colours, make a mixture not easily described. Marble columns and slabs of many hues and grains support the dome, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of these beautiful pillars and slabs were in the temples of Herod and even Solomon. The centre of attraction is the bare rock under the dome, enclosed and guarded by two screens, the outer of wrought iron, erected by the Crusaders at the end of the twelfth century, and the inner one of coloured wood, with space enough between the two to walk in.

The Holy Rock is fifty-eight feet long, and forty-four feet wide, and rises about six feet above the level of the floor.

Here tradition locates the place where Abraham offered up Isaac, and the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, which was bought by David on which to build an altar unto the Lord. It may also be believed that on this spot stood the Temple of Solomon, and later the more elaborate one erected by Herod, and the probability is that the great sacrificial altar stood here, up to which the people came from

all parts of the land, bringing their sacrifices with them to be offered by the priests.

What history is here, and what stories that rock could tell if only it could speak! Its silence and its rugged face impresses one as little else in all the land. The few Moslem things shown seem frivolous compared with that silent stone and its connexions with great men and ceremonies.

Exit by the south door leads past an old stone basin, sometimes filled with water from the Pools of Solomon. In front is the Mosque of Aksa, once a Christian church, erected by the Emperor Justinian in honour of the Virgin. The present building was erected in 1236, but has been ofttimes restored. Not including the annexes, it is eighty-eight yards long and sixty yards wide. The whole building impresses one more by its solidity than by any elegance of design. A pulpit of cedar wood inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl is one of the very few attractions of the building.

Leaving the Mosque of Aksa, we now go underground and first visit the vaults under the building just vacated. Two underground passages lead to the old Double Gate in the south wall of the Temple area. A massive monolithic column supporting four arches cannot

fail to attract attention, and is probably one of the oldest stones in all the buildings. The rude palm-leaves carved in the stones savour of the Byzantine period. Returning from these vaults, we now make our way to the underground chambers known as Solomon's stables.

A flight of forty-seven steps lead down to these spacious substructures, the piers of which are composed of very ancient drafted stone. Eighty-eight columns support the roof, over which is the platform that forms part of the lower court of the Temple. In these vaults the Jews sought refuge during their struggle against the Romans, and in the Middle Ages the horses of the Frank kings and Templars were stabled here, and the holes through the corners of the pillars by which they tethered their steeds may still be seen. It may safely be concluded that some of the building seen in these vaults was done in the time of Solomon ; many of the immense blocks of stone bear the Jewish bevel, and the marks of the tools are still discernible. On the west side of these underground chambers, and separated from them by a wide wall, there are two long passages which probably led up to the Temple, coming in through the triple gate in the south wall. No doubt, if excavations were allowed to be

made, it would be found that these two passages terminated in front of the sacred edifice to which the tribes "went up."

After doing the stables, a walk to the Golden Gate is the usual thing. This portal is of universal interest, as it is the only entrance to the Temple area on the east side. For many centuries it has been built up with solid masonry, and latterly strengthened from the inside, probably in fulfilment of the prophecy in Ezek. xliv. 1–3. No doubt Christ entered the Temple through this portal when He rode triumphantly in from Bethany accompanied by the exultant crowd. Few ever see the interior of this gateway, with its exquisite friezes and massive pillars. A special favour granted to the writer enabled him to secure a photograph of the place, which is reproduced in these pages.

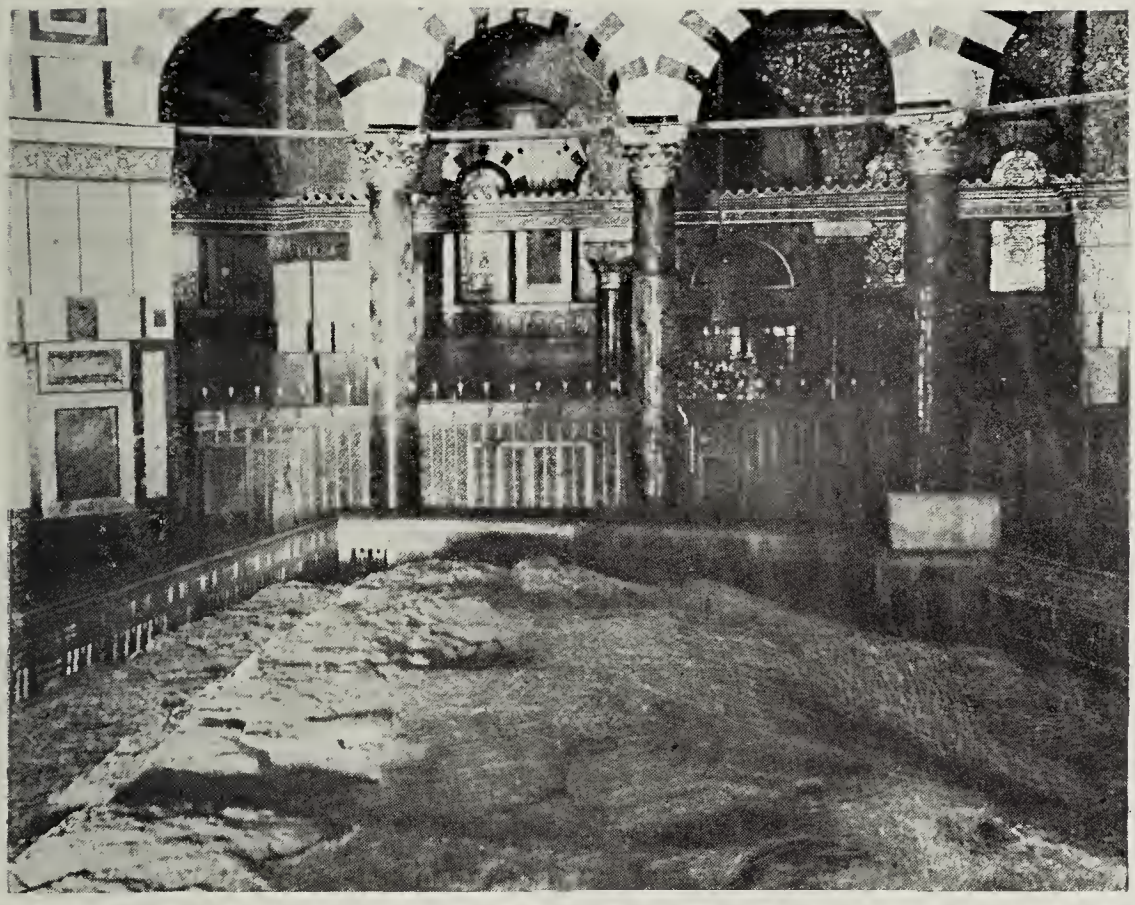
From the Golden Gate the visitor is escorted across the uncared-for outer court towards the exit, called "Bab-el-Habis," *i.e.* the Prison Gate, because the main prison of the district is near by.

On the right, in the corner of the Temple enclosure, rises a lofty minaret built on the solid rock.

The probability is that on this spot or near

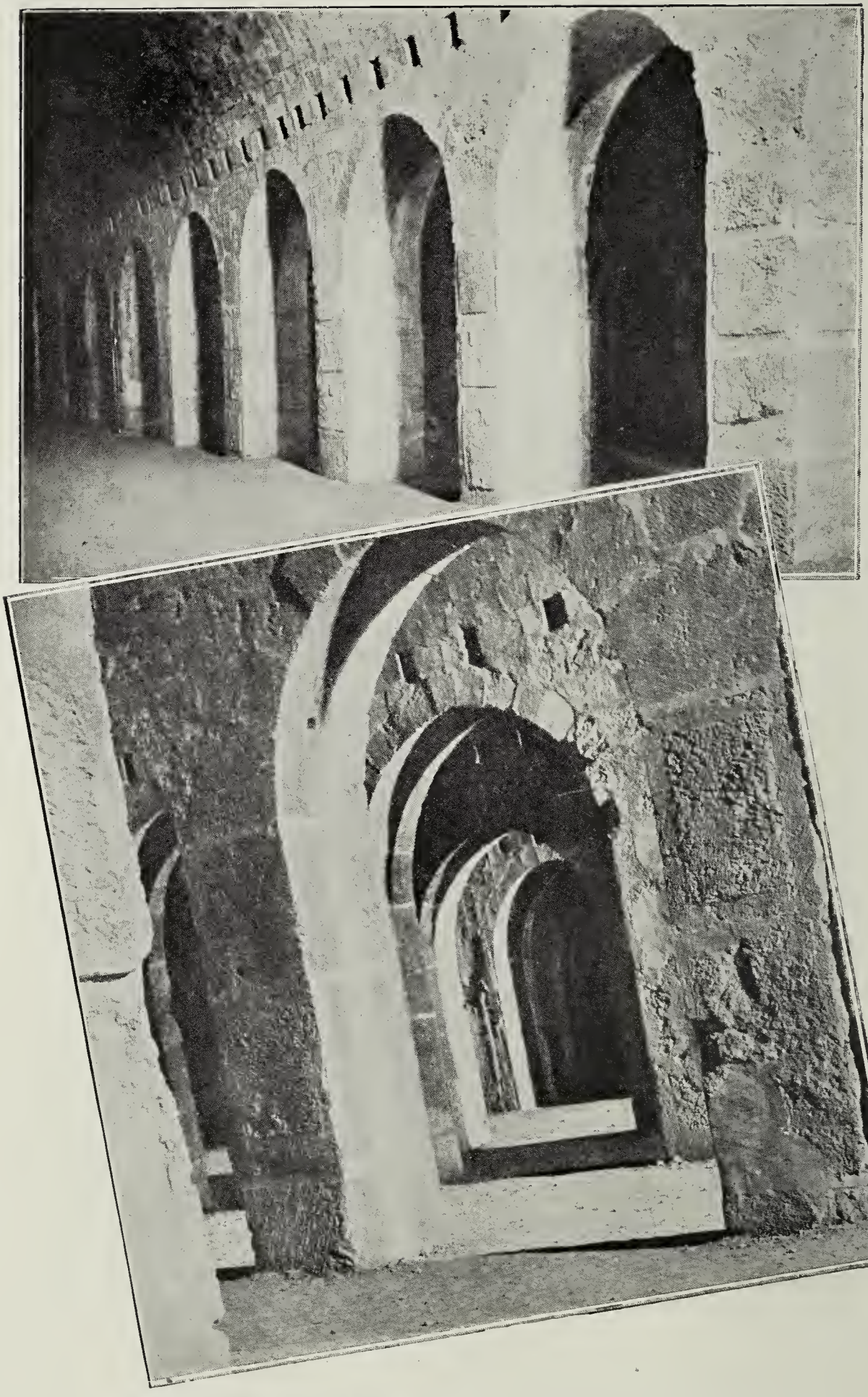
it stood the Tower of Antonio. From the gallery of the minaret a complete and perfect view of the whole Temple area may be had, and fortunate indeed is the one who can induce the man in charge to accept a present—not backsheesh—for the privilege of ascending the lofty tower. Of the few that try few succeed, as it is forbidden to grant the favour to unbelievers. But in spite of these restrictions and petty formalities the sights of the Temple area are worth any time and energy spent in seeing them, and the visitor to Jerusalem is well repaid for coming so far by being allowed to visit a place so full of both sacred and secular associations.

To those unable to go and see for themselves, the accompanying illustrations will convey a good idea of many parts of the Temple area and its buildings as seen through the lens of an ordinary half-plate camera, and many no doubt will agree with the writer that the words of the Psalmist may still be used in regard to that part of the Holy City, which he designated the "perfection of beauty," and that the modern name is no misnomer, for indeed the Temple area is an "honourable sacred place."



THE HOLY ROCK, MOUNT MORIAH.

INTERIOR OF THE GOLDEN GATE.



CORRIDORS IN SOLOMON'S STABLES UNDER THE TEMPLE AREA.

IV

JERUSALEM TO GALILEE AND BACK

OVER UNFREQUENTED TRACKS

IT came about in this way. I was detained in the Holy City, and knew that the delay meant a fortnight's idleness unless something was done to while away the time. Fortunately about this time a fellow-visitor mentioned that he was desirous of going to Galilee and back again, but, said he, "I would prefer to go on some unusual route, and see sites and scenes not generally visited by the ordinary tourist."

Inquiry proved that such a trip was possible, so, leaving behind heavy luggage and unnecessary impedimenta, we set forth with the result to be described in the following pages. A guide-book was our only companion and proved a very helpful and useful one.

Leaving Jerusalem early one morning we crossed the ridge of Scopus on the north-east side, and, descending into a deep valley, made our way in about an hour to the village of Anata, the ancient Anathoth, the birthplace of Jeremiah. There is nothing of interest to be seen in the place to-day. So, inquiring our way, we go on over a rocky path, and in about one hour reach Jeba, a small village perched on a rocky eminence, with a precipitous bluff on the north-east side. It was up this rocky cliff that Jonathan and his armour-bearer climbed upon their hands and feet and surprised the garrison of the Philistines, causing them to flee.

A little farther on across a deep ravine is Michmash, which we soon reached, and where fallen columns and huge blocks of stone tell of antiquity. We were interested in finding that these villages of Benjamin still retain their names as recorded in Scripture. Viewed and studied, Bible in hand, they meet exactly the requirements of sacred history, a good substantiation to the truth of Old Testament writ.

About two hours north of Michmash, we reached, after a weary and rough climb, the hamlet of Rimmon perched on a rocky hill

and notable in Scripture as a stronghold that sheltered six hundred men for four months against the attacks of Israel (Judges xx. 45–47). As we looked about this ruined fortress we were impressed by the large number of rock-hewn cisterns for the storage of water, and could understand how those defending themselves against a foe could hold out for so long a time. These cisterns bear traces of antiquity, and to-day are used by the Rimmonites. Each well mouth is blocked by a heavy stone rolled or dropped into it, and this can only be removed by the united efforts of those who come to draw water, another instance of Scripture lore as recorded in Genesis xxix. 2, 3, 8.

The old citadel here is built of very ancient material, and is a motley mixture of column, capitals, hewn and rough stones. As we passed the guest-room of the place, the head man came and gave us a hearty invitation to turn in and spend the night with them, which we refused with thanks. Ahead of us on the slopes of a high hill was the large village of Ophrah, the town of Gideon, and we were anxious to spend the night there, hoping to gather from some of the villagers tidings and traces of old wine-presses in the near vicinity of the place.

About an hour before sunset we reached

Ophrah, and were fortunate in getting the native schoolmaster to put us up for the night. Ophrah, like other places we had passed, bears many traces of antiquity ; rock-hewn cisterns and tombs abound, but wine and olive presses are few. However, one wine-press rewarded us for our trouble, and we were interested in seeing it. Its dimensions are about nine feet by five, and its depth about two feet. It is hewn in the rock, and its sloping bottom is quite smooth ; as this is the only press visible near Ophrah, it might possibly be the one in which Gideon was at work threshing corn. This ancient village is one of the most prosperous and attractive places in Southern Palestine.

Early next day we bade farewell to our kind host, and for several hours made slow progress over one of the roughest tracks in the land—sufficient evidence to us that we were indeed and in truth off the usual route of tourists. Towards afternoon we struck the new carriage road being made from Jerusalem to Nablous (ancient Shechem).

Near Nablous we came to Jacob's well, where Jesus met the woman of Samaria. Grieved we were to find that the Greek Church had covered the well in and had made a little chapel on the spot. Near by, we visited

the supposed tomb of Joseph, but came away more disgusted than pleased with what we had seen.

Sunset found us stowed away in a dirty room that we rented for fourpence from a caravanserai keeper, our only objection to this accommodation being numerous small company that robbed us of our night's rest; they served one purpose, however, and that was forcing us to an early start in the morning. At daybreak we rode out of Nablous, the home of fanatical Moslems and fierce barking dogs.

We were now bound for Samaria, once the pride and capital of these parts. Rain had fallen in the night, making the morning cool and pleasant. Over hills and through valleys we went for about two hours, when from a ridge that we had reached we looked down on what was once Samaria. Its position is magnificent, being on the spur of a hill, the top of which must have been levelled.

Samaria, once the capital of Israel and famous through all Biblical history, is now, in fulfilment of prophecy "ploughed as a field." An old church, now used as a mosque, is in the midst of a few rude houses of mud and stone; but more ancient than this are the many columns still standing in their original position to bear

their silent testimony to a once glorious city. As near as can be traced, the colonnade of Samaria was about twenty yards wide and over 1,800 yards in length; nearly two hundred columns are standing at the present time, about sixteen feet above ground, and all minus their capitals. If any place in Palestine would yield interesting results to the excavator surely Samaria would, if only some exploration society would undertake the task.

After an interesting hour among the ruins of Israel's ruined capital we resumed our journey, and after about three hours' ride came to the supposed site of Dothan. A few ruins only are to be seen near an oak-tree close to which is a fine spring. This, like many another place, still retains its old name, being known as Dotan by the natives in the surrounding villages.

We were now leaving behind us the mountains and hill country of Samaria and should soon be on the wide level plain of Esdraelon, but the setting sun told us that it was time we sought a shelter for the night unless we wished to spend it in the open. A large olive-grove near by encouraged us to think a village might be on its farther side, as it proved to be. At the entrance, on our asking for the public

guest-chamber, we were told that some lady missionaries lived in the village.

A smart lad kindly led the way to their simple home, and these isolated workers gave us a hearty welcome and insisted on our occupying their guest-room for the night. It was a mutual pleasure to meet thus in such an out-of-the-way place, and to see for ourselves the efforts of these lady workers among the villagers of Samaria. A night spent between clean sheets was a good preparation for the morrow, which was to prove one of the most interesting days of our trip.

By earliest dawn we left the village, and by sunrise had reached the plain below us.

This plain of Esdraelon, with its centuries of history, should have at least a week given to it for a study. Dozens of villages and hamlets, all connected with Scripture lore, are to be seen only short distances apart. Our intention was to take in only a few of the most interesting, as our time was limited. On reaching the plain we had to choose between five or six beaten tracks, all leading off in different directions. By means of guide-book and compass we decided on one that proved to be the one we wanted, because it led to Zerin, the ancient Jezreel. A ride of about two hours

brought us in sight of this once important centre, and as we rode over the level plain we could imagine the Israelites and Philistines chasing each other in battle.

Jezreel of to-day is a good-sized place, with an old tower in the middle, probably built on the site of a much older one in use in the days of Saul and David. We were forcibly reminded of the words of Scripture in 2 Kings ix. 37: "And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as the dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel," by seeing the heaps of dung and manure piled up to dry just outside the village. When dry this is stored away to be used as fuel in the cold and wet season of the year. This collecting and piling up of dung is peculiar to Galilee, and is evidently a very old custom with the people.

About twenty minutes east of Jezreel is one of the best, if not the best, spring in all Galilee, and is known as Gideon's fountain, and it was here his forces were put to the test by the way they drank water. The clear, cool liquid comes out of a cave in the hillside, and forms a pool quite fifty feet wide and from one to three feet deep; this water is used for irrigation, as well as to turn some mills.

We were loath to leave so charming a spot,

so reluctantly turned our backs on it and made toward Shunem, famous as a place of resort of Elisha, and also the home of the woman whose dead child was restored to life.

Shunem is a medley of dilapidated mud huts, surrounded by gardens kept green and fresh by a copious spring that rises in the centre of the dusty hamlet. As we were leaving Shunem a horseman overtook us, who kindly offered to show us a short cut to Nain, whither we were now bound. So accepting his kind services, we followed him, and in about an hour were at the entrance of the now tiny village that still bears its Scriptural name, where Jesus met the funeral procession of the widow's only son. As we neared the place we saw on our right several rock-hewn tombs, evidently ancient, and the possibility is that in one of these the widow's son might have been laid but for the timely appearance of the Saviour.

Nain of the present is a restored ruin on the side of a hill, and has a mixed company of Moslems and Christians living side by side. With the exception of a small church of quite recent date, Nain has nothing of attraction about it ; the story of the Gospel alone makes it of any interest.

A ride of about two hours across a level plain,

and a steep climb up the hillside, brought us within sight of Nazareth, where we intended to spend the coming Sunday. We soon found clean and comfortable quarters in a native hotel, and then went out into the town to purchase supplies for the day before us. As it was sunset, most of the shops were shut, but we secured sufficient bread, fruit, eggs, etc., to tide us over.

On Sunday morning we joined the natives in the Protestant church, and, although not understanding the language, were able to be with them in spirit. In the afternoon a short but agreeable visit was made to the orphanage on the hillside, but we were disappointed to find that the opening of the autumn session had been delayed by unavoidable circumstances.

During our short stay in the town of Jesus' boyhood we frequently passed the fine spring known as Mary's fountain. Without doubt the Saviour as a boy ofttimes accompanied His mother to this spot when she went to draw water. This being the only water supply of the town, a constant stream of women and children may be seen going and coming from morning until evening.

We did not care to spend our time visiting the numerous supposed sites connected with

our Saviour's early days; it was enough for us that we were privileged to pass a Sunday in the town, about the site of which there can be no doubt.

Our Sunday rest put us in good form for an early start on Monday morning, and by sunrise we were at Cana of Galilee, where the water was turned into wine. We had intended to enter the Greek church there and see the only one of the six waterpots that remains. But some careless person had mislaid or lost the key of the church, so that entrance was impossible to us for sight-seeing, and to the natives for prayer and worship. The priest, taking occasion of the loss, was indulging in a longer sleep than usual, so we could not see him.

A ride of four hours, taking us past a flourishing Jewish colony, brought us within sight of Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee, the latter one of the few places unspoilt or unaltered by man's invention. What a sight it was: the still, blue waters of the sea with its bare, barren hills on the eastern side, and the plain of Gennesaret on the north-west, and the compact town of Tiberias at our feet on the edge of the lake. A few little fishing-boats on the water with their white sails full of wind, gave the finishing

touch to the picture. No other such may be looked upon in all the land, and none so thrills the soul with emotion.

Here the Saviour did many of His miracles, over these waters He sailed, and around these shores He walked, doing good as He went; but the unbelief and hardness of heart of the people is manifest to-day in ruined Capernaum, Bethsaida, Magdala, and many such once-flourishing places.

What is of interest in Tiberias can soon be seen, and with reluctant hearts we turned our backs on so beautiful a place and set our faces homeward.

To traverse the same route was not our intention; so taking a more southern road, about noon we reached the mount called Tabor. Its apple-pudding shape makes it a prominent object among the hills of Galilee, and many would have us believe that this is the Mount of Transfiguration. That, like much else connected with the Holy Land, is a matter of pure speculation.

A quick and easy ride across another section of the plain of Esdraelon brought us again into the hill country of Samaria. For two days nothing of interest claimed attention until we struck the well-preserved Roman road from

Jerusalem to Cæsarea over which, without doubt, Paul rode when sent in charge of soldiers.

In the distance on a prominent hill we saw what appeared to be a large building, but as we got nearer we could see that it was a fine ruined castle, and, as it turned out afterwards, none other than that of Antipatris (Acts xxiii. 31), where Paul was lodged on that eventful journey. Interesting it was to find two thousand years afterward this fine old ruin still bearing its silent testimony to the New Testament story of the Apostle.

The forty-two miles to Jerusalem was a weary ride over rough, rocky paths that lay through valleys and across hills. Everywhere the natives were beating the olive-trees in Old Testament style (Deut. xxiv. 20), a demonstration to us how slow the people are to change their customs for more modern ones. Our last day's ride led us by the portion given to Joshua for an inheritance, and the simple yet solid sepulchre that still bears his name. There is much to lead us to believe that this is the actual place. Both name, location, and tradition, agree with the sacred record. Having examined the spot and compared it with what our Bibles told us, we pressed on. Late in the

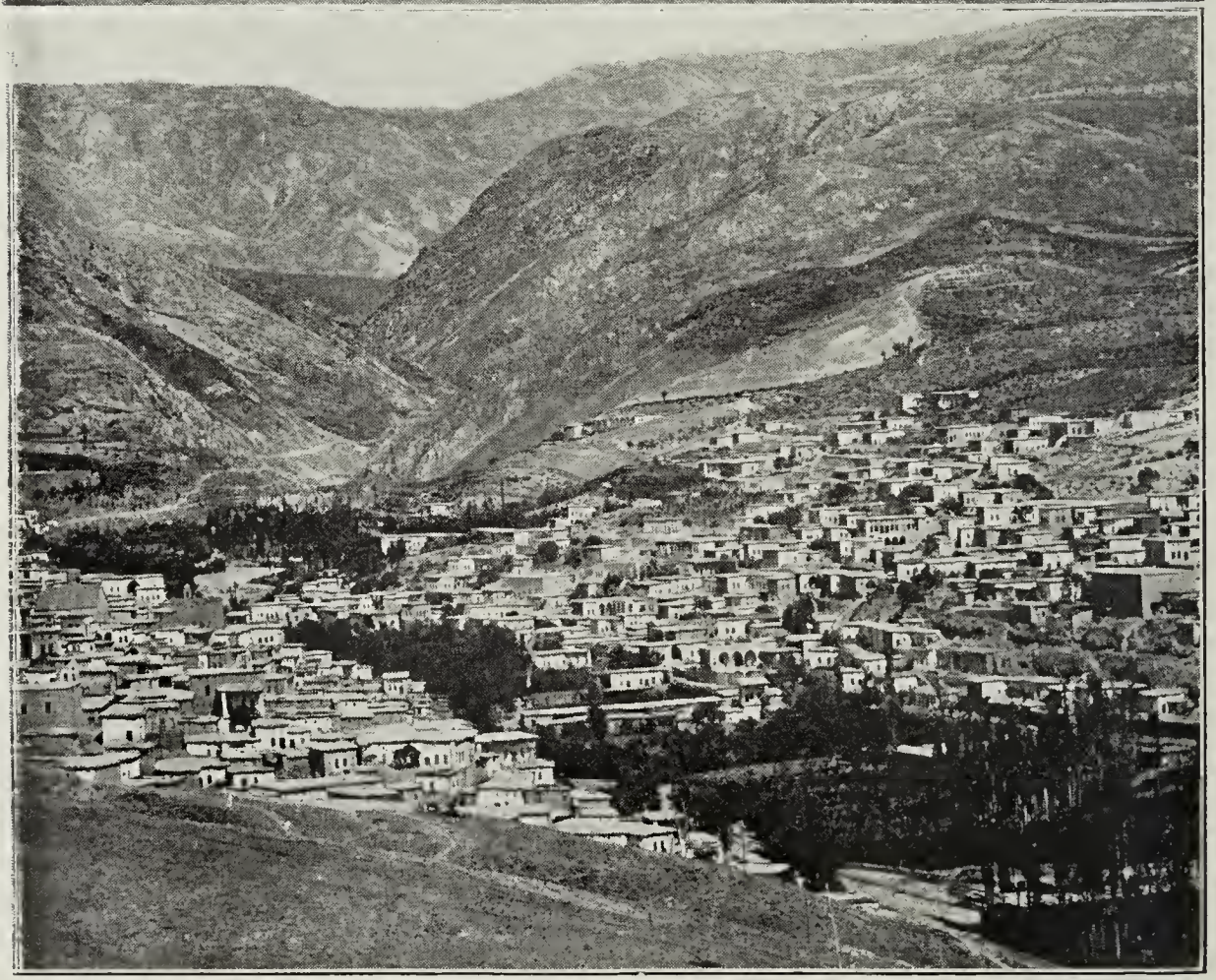
afternoon we reached the Holy City once more well pleased that ten days had been passed in going to such interesting places over unfrequented paths, although many of the paths were not worthy of such a designation because of their roughness. Once would suffice for such a trip both for man and beast.

NAZARETH.

STREET OF COLUMNS, SAMARIA.

DUNG-HEAPS OUTSIDE JEZREEL.

PINE FOREST, BEIRUT.



A VILLAGE IN THE LEBANON.

V

ACROSS LEBANON ON A DONKEY

I HAPPENED to be in Damascus—to thousands known as the Pearl of the Desert—and wanting to reach Beirout. I had the choice of two routes, the shorter in eight hours by the railway, or the longer and most picturesque across the mountains, valleys, and plains of the Lebanon, and not being pressed for time I chose the latter. I rode a donkey in preference to a horse, because with the latter there is the temptation to push on and do a little more, and ofttimes things that are interesting are passed because of weariness or haste, but with the humble donkey short stages must be made, and progress is necessarily slow.

Damascus was left about seven one July morning, and following the Abana for a time the road entered the deep ravine through which Naaman's competitor with Jordan approaches Damascus. The valley, which is full of vegetation

and silver poplars, is beautified by numerous tiny cascades falling over rocks, green with moss and maidenhair fern, and this veritable fairyland continues until a bridge is crossed that spans the river at Doummar.

This is one of the summer resorts of the better-class Damascenes, who delight to sit near the waterfall and smoke their *narghelies* and sip their coffee ; the spot is a charming one, and fascinates all who visit it.

Soon we left the river and fertile valley for the steep and barren hills that are such a striking contrast to the verdure below, but again and again the barrenness was relieved by the sudden appearance of some oasis of apricot, walnut, fig, or apple-trees, all flourishing and fruitful in happy confusion.

Four hours out from Damascus we reached Ain Fijeh, the main source of the Abana, one of the strongest and most beautiful springs in Palestine or Syria, rivalling even those at Banias or Dan. With tremendous force the clear, cold water rushes from beneath huge boulders of rock, and goes tumbling and roaring away into a dense forest of fruit and other trees down in the valley below. It is no wonder that the ancients erected a shrine to the river god there, and midst the music of the water

and singing of the birds held their festivals and ceremonies.

I would fain have lingered a day at so charming a spot, but had to go on, and soon the power-house for the electric cars and lighting in Damascus came into sight, the machinery being turned by a strong flow of water coming from the anti-Lebanon. A ride of quite three hours brought us to a large but prosperous village called Zebadanee, and here the first night was to be spent.

Arriving early in the afternoon gave me a good opportunity to go about the place and see something of the life of the people. The thing that interested me most was the stuffing of the sheep, not dead ones, but alive and healthy. Every house has one or two of such animals, which, from lambhood, are persistently made to eat, by having green food stuffed down their throats, until, after months of such treatment, the creatures can hardly stand by reason ot their weight and excess of fat. Before winter sets in the sheep are killed, the lean partly cooked and chopped into small pieces, then mixed with the melted fat to be used with rice or cooked wheat during the cold weather and spring.

At the door or in the court of every

house, women were to be seen patiently stuffing the already satisfied sheep, which is kept scrupulously clean by constant washings at the spring.

I wondered if there was any lingering trace here of the "fatted calf" of Scripture, for I learned that on a very special occasion the fatted sheep might be killed before its time, but it would be unusual.

I was also surprised to see quantities of potatoes being cultivated, the yield being very abundant and the quality excellent, but there was no market for them because of expense of transportation and taxes imposed by a Government adverse to improvement and progress.

The second day was a trying one—at least for six hours—because our route very largely followed the railway track, which in many places is very narrow and runs around the sides of high hills. Twice we were surprised by trains, and had only just time enough to dismount and scuttle away down the steep banks out of the way of the iron horse. Riding for hours under such conditions, not knowing any minute when a train might appear round a curve, was anything but pleasant, and with feelings of relief and lighter hearts we gladly left the rails for a stiff climb over the hills to Baalbek.

This pleasant town with its stupendous ruins, situated so beautifully between the two Lebanons, was reached early in the afternoon, thus allowing ample time to visit the sights.

So much has been written about the wonders of Baalbek that to repeat it would be foolish. Several years before I had visited the place, but was glad to see it again, especially after the excavations by the Germans.

There is little new to see ; the large altar is attractive to some, but I was attracted by the huge blocks of stone, elegantly carved, that once ornamented the entablature of the once famous Temple of Bacchus or the Sun. How such blocks, several tons in weight, were raised seventy or eighty feet in the air and put in position is still a puzzle that needs solving. Many such carved blocks lie scattered about, showing what a quantity of them there must have been.

Sunday's rest fitted donkey and rider for the next stage in the journey, which was towards the cedars. A weary ride across the great plain of Baalbek, which was covered with harvesters, brought us to the hills that lead to the great Lebanon range. In a small village inhabited by Maronites we found shelter for the night, but were glad to get away in the

morning from the women of the house, who begged for all they set eyes on of what belonged to us, besides extolling their great poverty, which was questionable.

Daybreak saw us at the foot of the great ridge that reared its rugged head nearly 8,000 feet above us, and three hours more saw us on the summit, after a climb that will not soon be forgotten. Although it was the middle of July, and under the scorching sun of the Orient, snow quite twenty feet deep was in abundance, and we crossed the ridge of the range on snow as hard as stone.

From this elevation, 7,700 feet above the sea, a most wonderful panorama was before, behind, and on all sides of us. The great plain of Baalbek, with its army of harvesters and, to vary the colour of the earth, freshly ploughed patches of red and brown soil, was behind us; below us the shining, quiet waters of the Lake Yammuneh, which the natives declare is infested with spirits and is fathomless.

On the right and left were the rugged and treeless peaks, ridges, and valleys of the Lebanon, and before us the cedars; beyond, the fertile hillside of the mountains that seemed to lose themselves in the air and sea, with Tripoli in full view, although quite forty miles distant.

Few such sights as these may be seen in Palestine or Syria, and the climber is well repaid for the time and exertion spent in reaching such a delightful standpoint.

It took quite an hour and a half to scramble down the rough, loose path which eventually landed us at the cedars. Some one has ventured to put in writing the fact that most who visit the cedars are sadly disappointed, but personally I was delighted as I wandered among these giants of the mountains which reared their lofty heads and spreading branches quite a hundred feet in the air. This group of cedars, which is the largest in Lebanon, contains about four hundred trees, quite a few of them very ancient and having circumferences varying from forty to fifty feet. One of the two cedars shown in the illustration is hollow, and for many years served as a prison, the offender being lowered into its hollow interior through a hole high up in the side of the tree. The group of trees is encircled by a wall, and in the middle is a small chapel of the Marionites, to which they gather once a year to celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration.

Two *gendarmes* were on duty to prevent any one breaking off branches, or otherwise damaging the trees, as much harm and destruc-

tion have resulted from visitors anxious to carry away souvenirs in the shape of walking-sticks and cone-bearing branches.

A sinking sun told us that the shade of the cedar-grove must be left and the shelter of the village near by sought, so, reluctantly, we turned our faces west, and were soon housed for the night in a tiny room put at our disposal by a kind-hearted native.

From the flourishing state of the country around us, it was very evident that we had entered that district of the Lebanon under French protection, and great and striking was the difference from that under Turkish jurisdiction through which we had been riding. Terraced hills, irrigated plains, fertile vales, and vine-covered mountains all spoke plainly about the blessings of Christian influence, a good government, and the administration of justice and fair taxation—this, in contrast to the blighting influence and maladministration of the Mohammedan authorities, all too apparent on the eastern side of the snow-crowned ridge behind us.

A pleasing feature of the French protected Lebanon is the large number of villages that are scattered over the hills, each clean and neat in the midst of its garden plot and orchard

of fruit-trees. The inhabitants of these mountain homes are all Christians, adherents of either the Greek, Latin, or Maronite Churches, with here and there a small community of Protestants. Most of the roofs of the houses are slightly sloped, so as to shed the water, which otherwise would soak though the mud coating that forms the surface. Here and there the red French tile enlivens the dull brown, and makes a pleasant relief and contrast.

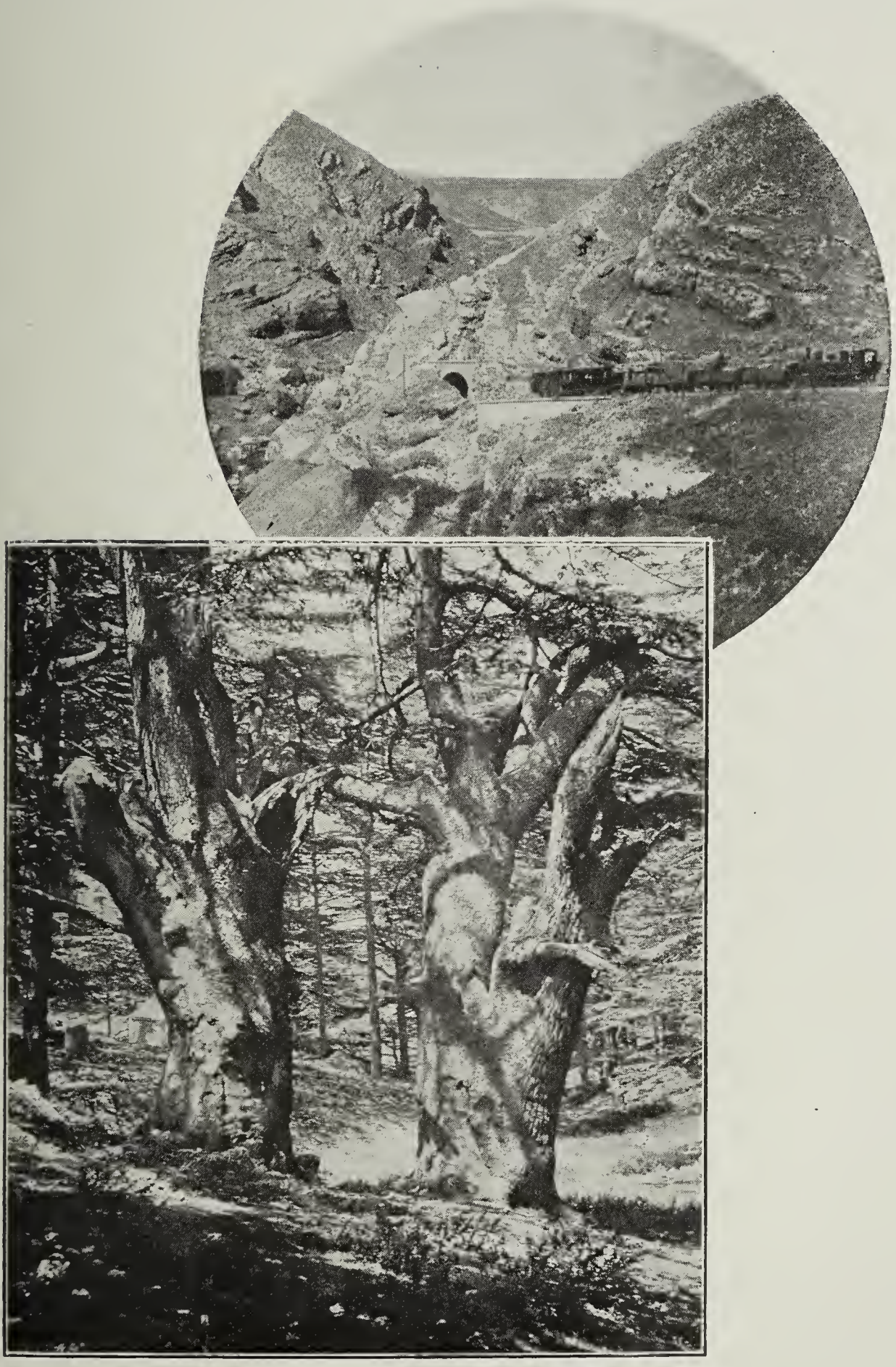
All through this region we noticed thousands of stunted mulberry-trees cultivated, and constantly cut back so as to produce small leaves only, on which the silkworms are fed, which forms so large a part of the work of the Lebanon natives. Every home rears hundreds of silkworms, and the cocoons are sold for a good price to some merchant, who has them unwound and exported to France. One such merchant showed us cocoons worth £20,000, and told us they would keep fifty girls employed for a year unwinding them, which we saw them doing in a most skilful manner. But space forbids any explanation on so interesting a subject ; some day perhaps I will write on the silk industry of the Lebanon.

Very noticeable was the scarcity of young men ; this is accounted for by the desire to

emigrate to America in order to make money. Hundreds of young people, males especially, have left their homes in the Orient to seek wealth in the Occident, which, when gained, is not always a blessing to them. Some return to take the whole family back to the land of opportunity, others return to squander their earnings, and some never return at all, but taking to themselves a wife from the motley crowd of emigrants that swarms in American cities, settle down as pedlars or shopkeepers. The Land of the Stars and Stripes is robbing the choicest part of Lebanon of most of its young blood and robust energy, which in years to come will be sadly missed and needed.

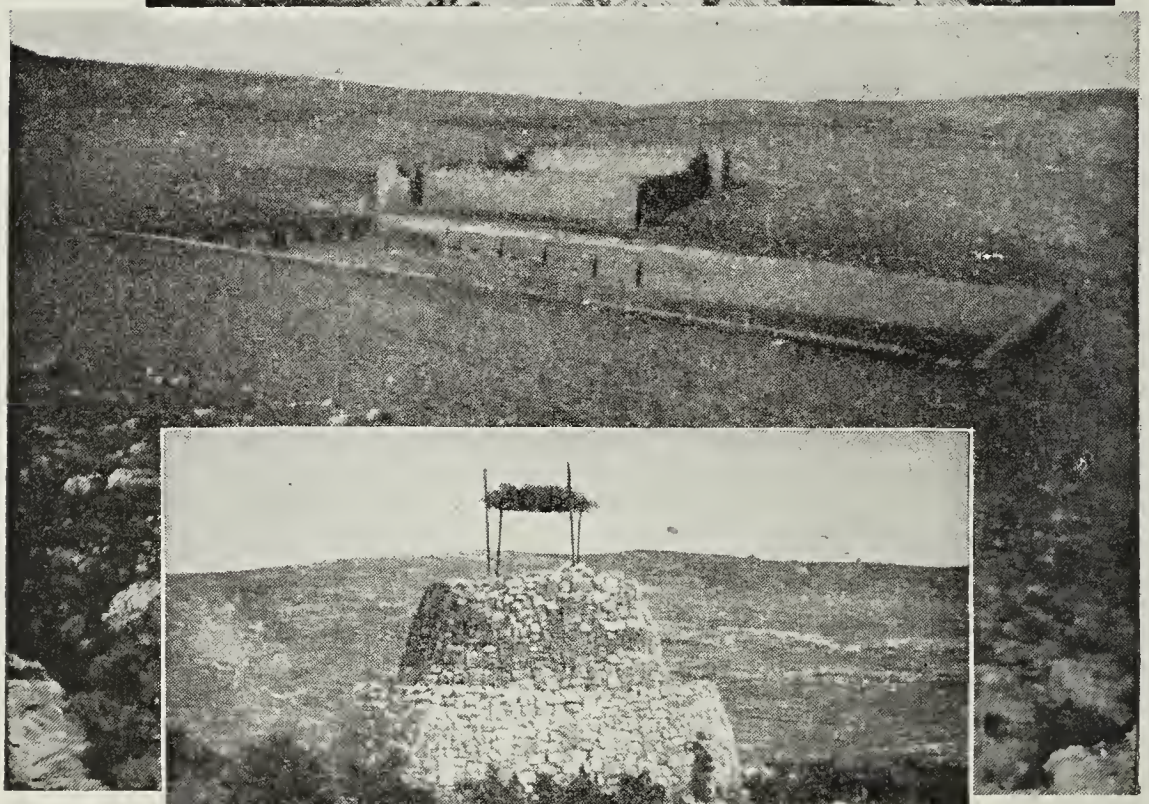
But I have strayed from the path and forsaken the saddle, with these remarks on the life of the people, so let us hie back to the donkey track and the sights that come in our way.

For a time after leaving the cedars we enjoyed the comfort of a good carriage road, well graded up and around the hills, and in an excellent condition. Our way at last led us off the main road, and by a rough path across the mountains, until we came almost suddenly upon the cascades and waterfalls of Afka, a spot visited by few in these days, but once frequented by the ancients, for here stood a famous temple of



SCENE ON THE DAMASCUS–BEIRUT RAILWAY.

CEDARS OF LEBANON.
(One is hollow and was used as a prison.)



RACHEL'S TOMB ON THE BETHLEHEM ROADSIDE.

SOLOMON'S POOL AND OLD CASTLE.

A WATCH-TOWER IN THE VINEYARDS.

Venus, and here too are the chief sources of the River Adonis; hence the Greek myth of Venus and Adonis was connected with this spot.

Out from a dark cavern rushes the clear, cold water that goes tumbling, roaring, and splashing down over the rocks into the valley below, the sparkling fluid, rugged boulders, and luxurious abundance of vegetation forming a picture such as only Nature could design.

The abundance of water in Northern Palestine and Lower Syria impressed us, and made us wonder why the Creator had been so lavish in a part thinly populated, and so sparing in a land that was, and is, thickly peopled.

After leaving the fascinations of Afka we began the descent to the seashore, and rapidly descended hundreds of feet. Village after village was passed, and many a well-built monastery noted as it was perched on some lofty eminence or rugged ledge of rock, and we often remarked—how do these people away up there pass their time, or what do they find to do?

At last the beautiful Bay of Juneh was reached, almost equalling the Bay of Naples in size and beauty. On the seashore we saw dozens of men hard at work with the most primitive tools, making quite large sailing-

boats, which were to ply between Egypt, Cyprus, and the different ports on the Syrian coast. It was interesting to find these modern Phœnicians still engaged in the calling of their ancestors, and to learn that the modern craft of the Syrian coast are durable, seaworthy, and much sought after by those " that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters."

Presently Beirut, the goal of my mountain trip, came into sight, but ere it was reached I had to make my way slowly along one of the heavy sand roads, many of which lead through the extensive pine-forest which is such a favourite resort of the people resident in the near-by city. These thousands of pines were planted as a protection against the encroachment of the sand from the south, and are serving their purpose well.

Soon shops begin to appear, then residences, later the crowded streets, and in due time the hotel, and in place of the simple, easy-going, Oriental life of the mountains, we find the rush, fashion, and elegance of the Continent. I was glad to stretch myself between the sheets of a good bed, and to lull myself to sleep thinking of the variety of scenes I had looked upon whilst trundling across Lebanon on a donkey.

VI

ON PATRIARCHAL GROUND

LOCALITIES and sites connected with the early patriarchs of the Old Testament must always be of interest to the student and careful reader. Anything connected with Abraham is of an unusual interest, especially so as the more prominent places mentioned in connexion with him are without doubt to be looked upon to-day, although four thousand years have passed away. To Christians, Jews, and Moslems, the haunts and districts ascribed to Abraham, who has been called "the chief of the patriarchs," are much revered and almost worshipped, but comparatively few of any of the above religious sects are favoured by being able to visit these interesting localities and scenes. Three things combine to make a visit to these places difficult, viz. the obstruction of the Turkish Government, the fanaticism of

the Mohammedans, in whose hands the sacred places are, and the lawlessness of and danger from the Bedouins who abound in some of the districts. Yet, in spite of drawbacks, some do get to visit these interesting spots, and it was lately the good fortune of the writer to visit and photograph most of the visible things relating to Abraham, the "father of the faithful."

Two places stand out prominently in the life of the patriarch, viz., Hebron and Beersheba. The former is one of the oldest towns in existence, and has had an unbroken record. It is about twenty-two miles from the city of Jerusalem, and can be reached by carriage or horseback. The latter way gives better opportunity of studying the country and the interesting places that must be passed as you go along.

Leaving Jerusalem at the Jaffa Gate we follow for a time the Bethlehem road. If the start is made in the morning, you will see the train leaving the station for Jaffa, the railway being for a short distance near the carriage road. Soon we come on to the plain of Rephaim, a place once the favourite camping-ground of the Philistines, and also noted as being the place where David heard "the sound of a going in the top of the mulberry-trees."

In about a quarter of an hour the clean town of Bethlehem comes into view perched up on a hill away to our left, and a little farther on we reach the undoubted tomb of Rachel. At the time of the writer's visit this interesting shrine was open and being visited by hundreds of Jews, who go there to bewail the loss of so valuable a member of their race, or, as they style her, "the mother of their nation." There is little doubt that the large erection by the roadside near Bethlehem covers the place where Rachel was buried, for we read in Gen. xxxv. 19, "And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, and Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day."

For a few miles the road lies between vineyards and gardens, from which a good quantity of fruit is gathered and sent to the Jerusalem market. Here in these vineyards may be seen the "lodges and watch-towers" of the Bible, as necessary to-day as ever they were, for unless the vines and trees were watched during the time of fruit, much damage and loss would be caused by wild animals and human beings. The "little foxes that spoil the vines" (The Song of Solomon, ii. 15) are numerous, and the

watchman from his exalted position has to keep a sharp lookout for intruders. Presently the Pools of Solomon come into sight on our right hand (Eccles. ii. 6), and would well repay a visit, but at the same time cause a delay of an hour or more. From here the way lies across open country that is cultivated, and from which fairly good crops of wheat, barley, or millet are gathered.

At about two-thirds of the distance a number of rock-hewn tombs are seen, some of them very handsome and of fine proportions; these are of some interest, but of far greater interest is a fine columbarium hidden away in a cave up on the hillside. These places are so called because in appearance they are like a dovecote, but instead of being a resting-place for doves, the scores of niches here seen in the rocky sides of the cave were used as receptacles for the urns of ashes of cremated persons, or the skulls of those who had been long buried, these being modes of sepulture used by the Romans and others. Two or three miles more bring us to a fountain of cool, clear water that flows out of a hole in the rock into a large stone basin. Tradition would have us believe that this is the place where Philip baptized the eunuch when he was on his way to Gaza.

As we go on toward Hebron the tomb of Jonah is seen, and nearer the town, a place supposed by the Jews as that where Abraham received the angels. Then come the extensive and delightful vineyards of Hebron, that spread for quite a mile round the ancient city, thus enclosing the old place in a wide circle of green. The only things against Hebron are its dirty, rough, narrow streets, and its fanatical inhabitants. These latter, however, are improving as they come more into contact with Western ideas and life, due in some measure to the presence for many years of a few Protestant missionaries, including a kind and energetic doctor.

Before proceeding to the special sights of Hebron, let us visit the more modern sights that are of interest, the first of these being the large tanneries for the preparation and finishing off of the water-skins so much in use throughout the East. It is a remarkable thing that this work is done in only two places in Palestine or Syria, these being Hebron and Nablous. Here in the city of Abraham thousands of these skins are treated and sent away to far-distant lands for use where buckets and jars are unknown. The men in one of these yards told me the average time to complete one skin and

make it ready for use was four months, and its value about ten shillings. These skins present a strange sight when laid out in rows, so that the warm sun may do its part in curing them. In appearance they look exactly like pigs that have had their heads and legs taken off.

Another interesting industry confined to Hebron is the making of glass bracelets, also a variety of bottles, vases, and globes; but as this work is only done at a certain season of the year, it is not every one that sees this primitive and fascinating work. Last, but none the less interesting, is the potter at his rude wheel, turning clay into all kinds of vessels for use in the homes of the people. These potters generally work hidden away in a dark corner out of sight, but their nearness is indicated by the presence of a variety of freshly turned vessels put out on the path to harden in the sun before being carried away to the baking kiln.

Now let us away to other sights directly connected with the centuries long past. First in order, according to the record, is the place where Abraham received his angelic visitors. Tradition and Scripture (Gen. xviii. 8) both lead us to believe that it was under an oak-tree in the plain of Mamre that the patriarch entertained his guests, and to substantiate it there

has been preserved and revered the fine old tree that bears the name of Abraham's Oak. This fine tree measures about thirty-two feet in circumference at its base, and although apparently dying, has yet a lot of life in it. Latterly it has been railed in to protect it from being damaged and carried away in chips by thoughtless and over-zealous curio-hunters.

Leaving the suburbs of the city and going to its southern extremity, the next item of interest is the series of large reservoirs known as the Pools of David, because of his supposed connexion with them. The largest of these is square, each side being more than forty yards long, and it is constructed of hewn stone that from its appearance is without doubt ancient. There is every reason to believe that these pools were in existence and use in the days of David, for in 2 Sam. iv. 12, we read, "And David commanded his young men, and they slew them (*i.e.* the murderers of Ishbosheth), and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron." The boys and men of the city amuse themselves by bathing in the waters of these pools, which, it may be said, is not used for drinking purposes.

Not far from the pools, and just inside the city, is the place of greatest interest to all who

find their way to this ancient town, viz., the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham bought, and where he, Isaac, and Jacob, with their wives, have without doubt lain these long centuries undisturbed by the inquisitive peerer into the past, or the pick and shovel of the excavator. This, too, is one of the now few places that the Mohammedans have up to the present kept closed to outsiders.

Machpelah was the only piece of land that Abraham ever possessed in his own right. A visit even to the exterior of this place is made more or less unpleasant by the presence of the Mohammedan fanatics who abound there, all eager and ready to prevent any unbeliever making an attempt to enter a place so sacred to them, that it may not be defiled by any outside the religion of Islam. Only twice, I think, during the last century did Christians enter this place, and then only the mosque over the cave, having special permits from the Sultan. These were King Edward VII., when Prince of Wales, and, later, the American ambassador from Constantinople.

The original cave purchased by Abraham cannot be seen, it being under the large mosque that has been built over it. No one, not even a Mohammedan, is allowed to enter the cave,

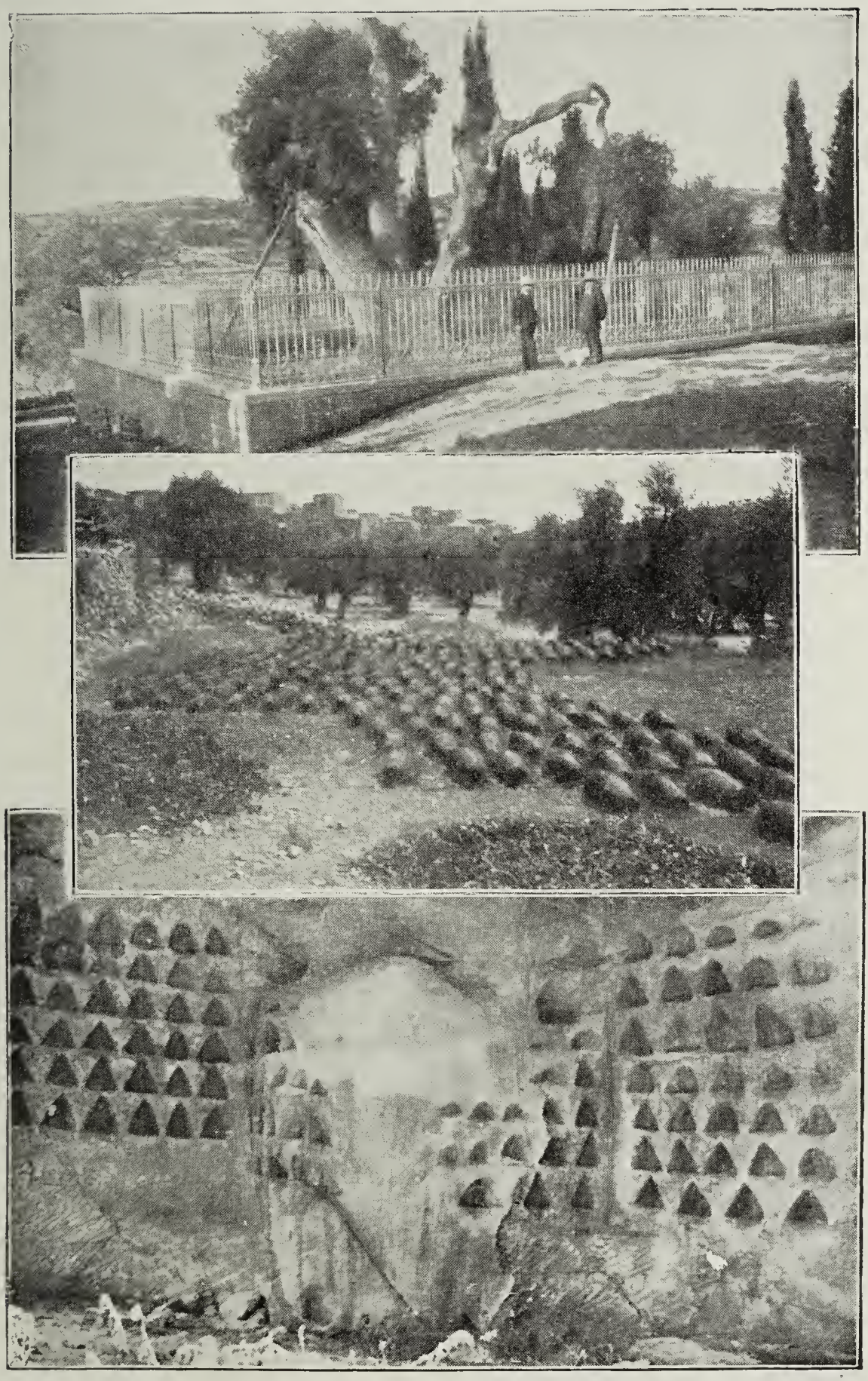
although a grating in the floor of the mosque allows of a portion of it being seen, and that faintly, as only one small oil lamp let down from above is permitted. The mosque is entered on the south side by two flights of steps, access to the western entrance being strictly forbidden, and the visitor is only allowed to ascend seven steps of the eastern flight, that being a very special privilege granted to enable the Jews more particularly to reach a hole in the wall in which they drop petitions to Abraham asking special favours of him. Beyond these seven steps it is not wise or safe to go, as fanatical, murderous eyes and hands are ready and waiting to prevent by force the farther entrance of the infidel.

In the mosque itself stand six cenotaphs, which are said by the Mohammedans to stand exactly over the spots where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with their wives, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah, were buried. These erections are built of stone and are covered with green cloth embroidered with gold and silver. In another part of the mosque is a similar memorial, erected over the spot beneath which is supposed to contain the remains or mummy of Joseph, for, although Scripture tells us that he was buried in Shechem (Josh. xxiv. 32), Mohammedan

history assures us that about five hundred years ago the remains of Joseph, the son of Jacob, were transferred from Shechem to Hebron and deposited in the cave of Machpelah.

The best view of the so-called cave of Machpelah, that is, the mosque, is obtained from the north side on the hill that rises directly above the building. From this point a full view of the size of the mosque is to be had, together with its minarets, battlements, and buttresses, sixteen on each side and eight at each end. The photograph of the mosque from which the illustration is reproduced was taken by the writer in a moment when the watchful fanatics were off their guard. The special camera with which this picture was taken gives a unique and splendid view of this sacred and intensely interesting shrine.

With an outward view of this ancient structure, with its undoubted certainty, we have at present to be content, and console ourselves with the hope that at some time in the near future some one with respect for the dead may be permitted to enter the long-closed cavetomb and find out what and whose remains are deposited there; for, although the bodies of Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah have long since turned into dust, it is not unreasonable to



ABRAHAM'S OAK IN THE PLAIN OF MAMRE.

WATERSKINS CURING IN THE SUN.

COLUMBARIUM, OR ANCIENT RECEPTACLE FOR REMAINS OF THE DEAD.

OLD WELL MOUTH, BEERSHEBA.

DRAWING WATER, BEERSHEBA.

ENTRANCE TO THE MOSQUE, HEBRON.

FORBIDDEN STEPS, HEBRON MOSQUE.

expect that the mummies of Jacob and Joseph are still there in a good state of preservation.

The other place of interest connected with the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac is Beersheba, a place that, after the possession of the land by the children of Israel, became its southernmost boundary. It is about forty miles southwest of Hebron, away in the wilderness, and is only reached after a somewhat fatiguing ride of ten hours. It is very interesting to note that the name of the place is the same to-day as it always was, and also that the name, like many Scriptural designations, means just what the place bearing it is, viz. seven wells, "beer" meaning well, and "sheba" or "suba" seven.[1] Here, then, far away from city or town, we find the cause that led Abraham and Isaac to be so much in these parts. Their numerous flocks, herds, and attendants needed a constant supply of water, and here it was, and here it is, serving the same purpose, viz. that of quenching the thirst of thousands of cattle and human beings.

[1] We have allowed the writer's explanation of Beersheba to stand. But we think it right to say that *The Student's Hebrew Dictionary* and many other authorities give the meaning as "well of the oath or covenant." It is true, however, that the Hebrew word for oath is derived from the word for "seven."—Ed.

Having seen all that claimed attention in Hebron, I set out for Beersheba mounted on a donkey, with a smart native boy as guide and driver. About two hours out, at the foot of some hills, we came to the upper and the nether springs (about half a mile apart) that Caleb gave to Achsah, his daughter. Our way then lay through a long valley, the sides of which were thickly covered with stunted ash-trees, the green foliage of which was a pleasant relief to the eyes from the yellow, rocky hills behind and before. In about two hours we reached a large village known now by the name Dahariyeh, but probably the Kirjath-sepher, the taking of which was to be rewarded by the gift of Caleb's daughter. Fortunately, we found a Bedouin tent outside the village, and, making for it, were warmly welcomed by the owner.

Here we were treated in patriarchal style. Our host set about getting us supper, which consisted of several dishes, some savoury, others not, with an unlimited supply of unleavened bread. Truly it was a hasty meal and reminded me much of the hurried repast Abraham prepared for his guests. We got a few hours' rest in spite of howling jackals, barking dogs, and braying donkeys, not to mention numerous smaller creatures that made a closer acquaint-

ance of us than we cared for, and at daybreak were on the move toward Beersheba.

This part of the journey meant crossing a large portion of the wilderness that takes its name from the place we were bound for. Five weary hours passed without sign of life, when over a hill in front of us came two donkeys and a camel laden with large jars of water slung across their backs in nets made of palm fibre. This assured me that we must be nearing the place, and soon, in a depression ahead of us, I saw hundreds of sheep, camels, goats, and donkeys, all waiting their turn to be watered.

In a short time I was in the midst of this busy desert scene, gazing with a joyful interest on somewhat similar a sight as Abraham and others did centuries ago. I was anxious to find out and see for myself if seven wells really existed or if it were only a fabrication. Walking about I saw that the flocks and herds were being watered from five wells, and then, getting into conversation with one of the shepherds, asked him if these were all. His answer was, "Come, and I will show you the place where two more are, but they are choked with earth and stones." I followed him, and near by, in opposite directions, he showed me depressions in the ground that he said were the other two

wells, thus making the required number. He told me they intended clearing out these stopped wells, so as to obtain a larger supply of water. He proved to me the presence of the wells by scraping away some of the earth and revealing the old stones in position at the top of the shaft.

Four of the working wells have erections over them that are called "sageeyah." These are in the form of an arch over the mouth of the well, and through a hole in the centre a rope works on a pulley. To this rope are fastened dozens of jars, tins, or wooden boxes that go down bottom side up and, passing through the water, come up filled with water. On reaching the top these receptacles empty themselves into a pool as they turn over on the wheel attached to the pulley.

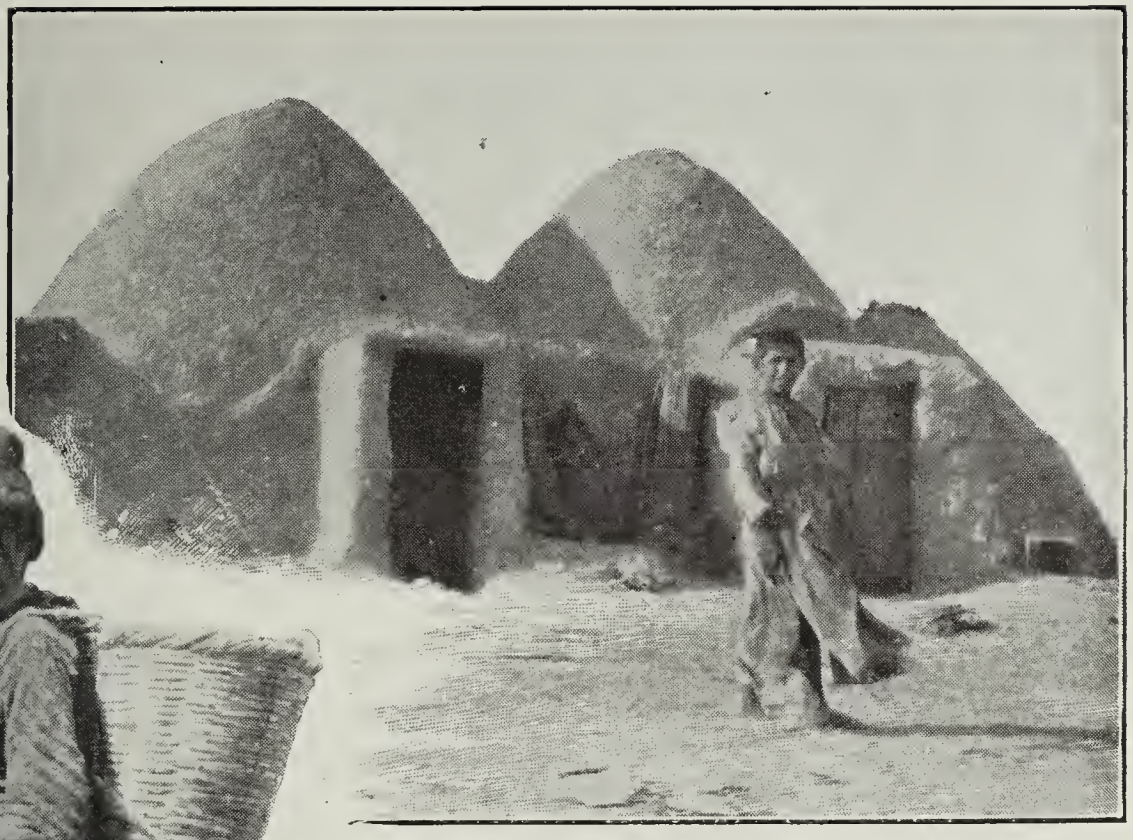
This primitive machinery is kept going by a camel hitched on to a rude windlass and then set going round in a circle, being blindfolded to keep it from getting giddy. Another way is to let down a large skin into the well, and when full raise it to the surface by hitching a camel on to the end of the rope and making it walk away from the well, and so pull up the heavy skin of water, which is emptied into a trough below. Instinctively the camel turns

and walks back to the starting-point, the end of the rope being held by a man on the return journey.

The fifth well, being smaller in circumference, has no "sageeyah" over it, the water still being raised hand over hand. It was intensely interesting to note as a proof of the antiquity of these wells, that deep grooves had been worn in the hard stones that formed the mouth. I measured several of these grooves and found they varied from four to seven inches in depth. The average depth of the five wells is about one hundred feet, and circumference ten feet.

The Arabs told me the water never fails, and they were loud in the praises of him who dug the wells, a work they would never undertake, and plentiful were the blessings they asked of Allah (God) on Abraham, the one they affirm provided and drank from these life-preserving places in so dry, barren, and thirsty a spot. I would fain have lingered longer in so fascinating a place, with all its patriarchal and Scriptural associations, but I was reminded of the tens of thousands of Abraham's descendants through Ishmael who are without the knowledge of Him Who said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," and, "He that believeth on Me

shall never thirst." I reluctantly mounted my beast and bade farewell for a time to ground and scenes that must have been familiar to Him whose name is known and revered by millions and who is held in respectful remembrance by many who have never read about Abraham ; all they know, and that fairly accurately, has been handed down from generation to generation. In these out-of-the-way places the patriarchs still live, although little known by those living in the West.



HUNDREDS OF VILLAGES ARE BUILT LIKE THIS.

A BOY MESSENGER OF BEIRUT.

A SEATLESS CARRIAGE IN COMMON USE BEYOND THE LEBANON.

ONE OF THE HUGE WATER-WHEELS USED FOR IRRIGATION ON THE ORONTES. WOMEN WASHING CLOTHES.

ENTRANCE TO THE OLD CASTLE AT ALEPPO.

VII

AT THE CRADLE OF THE PATRIARCHS

A WEEK IN ABRAHAM'S COUNTRY

NEITHER the name "Kurdistan" nor "Aleppo," if met with in an atlas or a newspaper, would convey much to the average intelligence or to the imagination. The most that they would suggest would be vaguely defined areas in Asiatic Turkey. But it would be very different if in some way the comparatively modern nomenclature could inform us that about here was the ancestral home of Abraham, before he went forth into the land of Canaan; that it was to a well in this country that Rebekah came with her pitcher on her shoulder; and that this was the country where in due time Rebekah's favourite son came to sue and serve for the hand of Rachel. If all that adventure and romance which belongs to the time when the world was young could

be expressed in a geographical term, the land would possess an interest for us second only to that possessed by Palestine itself.

Recently I have made an expedition to the borders of Kurdistan. My plans had been to go on a Scripture-selling tour in Moab, that ancient kingdom east of the Dead Sea, named after the sons of Lot. Indeed, the books had already been sent on in advance in charge of a trusty Arab. But while preparing for this journey, there came a request for me to accompany some girls from the English blind school in Jerusalem to the American mission at Orfah, far away to the north of Syria.

In spite of the great historical interest which such a tour must possess to any one fascinated with the story of the patriarchs, it was a responsibility not to be lightly undertaken to pilot three blind girls through a journey so long, with means of travel so tedious and uncomfortable, and with so many changes involved *en route*. But the request was not to be refused, and let it be said to the credit of the Oriental that all along the way there were plenty of willing hands to help with my *protégées*, and thus the undertaking was made easier. The Orientals are noted for their sympathy with afflicted people.

The first part of the journey was by sea

from Jaffa, the Biblical Joppa, where Jonah embarked on his journey to Tarshish. Nothing more adventurous occurred to us on this voyage than a delay owing to the shipping of several hundreds of sheep, rather barbarously "helped" on board. Then we made our way along the coastline of old Samaria and Galilee, and Phœnicia, past the ports of Tyre and Sidon, now rejoicing in less euphonious modern names, and early on the morning after our embarkation we dropped anchor in the harbour of Beirut, the Mediterranean seaport under the shadow of the Lebanons.

In Beirut our bundles were carried for us by one of the many small boys who are really the handy-men of this Syrian Liverpool, and with huge baskets on their backs, are available at every corner. For quite a small coin they will carry one's bundles to any part of the town, and are never happier than when thus employed.

For the rest of the way, from Beirut to Kurdistan, it might almost be said that we went by railway train, and later by less modern and less comfortable conveyances, through the pages of the Pentateuch. We took the railway which crosses the summit of the Lebanon—though it was summer this ride was cold—and we remembered how Moses prayed God that he

might see these mountains. One interesting stopping-place was Hama, which was the principal city of Upper Syria from the time of the Exodus onwards, and which marked the northern border of the land to be occupied by the Israelites. Harvesting was in full swing, and men, women, and children were busily gathering in the abundant crops. It may well have been along these fertile plains of Cœle Syria, between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon, that Abraham and Lot made their fateful way to Sichem; that Rebekah, obeying the promptings of her heart, mounted her camel behind Abraham's servant, and took her long pilgrimage to meet Isaac; and that Laban pursued the fleeing Jacob.

This journey from Beirut to Aleppo, scarcely longer in point of mileage than from London to Manchester, took us nineteen hours. A good-natured Turkish officer shared the compartment, and helped to enliven the way, as well as to keep undesirables from travelling with us. Beyond Hama, on the River Orontes, we could see several of the high water-wheels which are used to raise water from the river to the high ground on either side. These *naura*, as they are called, are of huge dimensions, some of them nearly seventy feet in diameter.

As the wheel passes through the water, small boxes are filled with the fluid, and when they reach the top they empty their contents into a trough, from which the water is directed into the necessary channels. Night and day these wheels turn, and are only to be stopped by diverting the force of the water below into another course. Altogether, it is a curious example of Syrian engineering, and the creaking of the wheels, together with the blowing of the wind through the spokes, makes queer music, which rings in the ears for long after the train has left this wonderful river behind.

According to Egyptian monuments the town of Aleppo was in existence in the time of Abraham. In antiquity, therefore, it must almost rival Damascus, and it is all the more strange that it appears to have no connection whatever with Old Testament history. From the middle of the town rises the ruin of an immense castle which serves as barracks for the Turkish troops. This castle has only one entrance, spanning the moat surrounding the citadel, and neither visitors nor residents are allowed inside the keep.

Beyond the castle and the native bazaars, which are extensive and fairly clean, there is little to claim attention in this Syrian town.

It was, however, touched by the hot wind of industrial dispute while we were there, and it was curious to find in the impassive East so modern and Western a thing as a strike in progress—a transport strike too, which delayed our journey.

We were taken from Aleppo almost to the bank of the Euphrates by the railway which the Germans are now building[1] right across Asiatic Turkey as far as Bagdad, the city which scintillates in the *Arabian Nights*. Surely there is nothing so romantic in the whole history of railway enterprise as the iron rail which will link up Constantinople and the ruins of Babylon, which will touch two of the four rivers of Eden, the Euphrates and the Tigris, and which will enable one to go from the Tarsus of the apostle to the Padan-Aram of the patriarch. Already a trestle bridge allows the train to pass over that river upon which the sixth angel of the Apocalypse poured out his vial. The track is laid also for many miles on the eastern side towards Mesopotamia, but is not yet open for public traffic.

Beyond the Euphrates we enter what may well be called the cradle of the patriarchs, perhaps even the nursery of the human race.

[1] Written in 1913.

It is a wild country, far removed now from the civilizations the springs of which it nourished. Three hundred miles away to the north-east is Mount Ararat, raising one of its peaks, perhaps the one on which the Ark rested, into eternal snow.

Through this land, in which dwelt the sons of Shem, we went in a seatless carriage, which seems to be the custom east of the Euphrates. Unprovided as we were with rugs and bedding and cushions, and making our way over a country without roads, the experience was by no means pleasant, and it was with great relief that we entered the town of Orfah, attended by a gaping and not too obliging crowd.

Is it possible that this now considerable town of Orfah was that Ur of the Chaldees of which we hear so faintly in the Book of Genesis? There are two places which bear the name of Ur, one of them being hundreds of miles away in ancient Chaldæa, nor far from the mouth of the Euphrates in the Persian Gulf. The other is the Orfah or the Urfa of our visit. The weight of scholarly opinion is on the side of the southern Ur, but it is said to be the "universal" opinion of the Jews, not to mention the local belief, that Ur is the modern Orfah, and an additional plausibility is given to the

theory because of the fact that what is generally recognized to be the original Haran, which was the first sojourning-place of Abraham's family on the way from Ur to Canaan, is also nestling in the Mesopotamian valley, less than thirty miles away. The term "of the Chaldees" is certainly rather against this view, for the other Ur is actually in Chaldæa, far away to the south. But those who believe that Ur of the Chaldees is in northern Mesopotamia are equal to this objection, and urge that in former days, with the extension of Chaldæan power, the name travelled northwards and attached itself to this ancient city.

However it be, the town of Orfah to-day is of considerable size and importance, and jealously guards the Abrahamic tradition. The town, now inhabited by Armenians and Kurds, lies as it were in the bend of the elbow of the upper Euphrates, and the sister river, the Tigris, is not a hundred miles away. Whatever its connection with the story of the patriarchs, there is no doubt that Orfah, then known by the Greek name of Edessa, for which Urfa is the Turkish equivalent, had a stormy history during the Middle Ages. Crusading steel flashed here, and Christian and Moslem waged war as it only could be waged in times mediæval.

From the point of view of Christian origins, too, the town and the whole country are interesting. Christianity is said to have begun in the Jewish colony in Orfah as far back as the second century; and, indeed, on the mountains of Kurdistan are still to be found the remains of what was once the greatest missionary church in the world, that of the Nestorians, whose spiritual and temporal head is known, even at this late day, as the Catholicos of the East.

On arrival at Orfah, after a good deal of talking and inquiring we were piloted by one youth to what is the spiritual lighthouse of this ancient Mesopotamian town, namely, the American mission, and it should be set down to his credit that he failed to claim payment or demand backsheesh for his services. We were kindly received by those in charge, the girls being consigned to their quarters with others similarly afflicted, while I was put up temporarily in a "prophet's chamber."

One of the interesting features of this mission is its industrial work, which helps to bring cheer and comfort into many a home wrecked by the massacres of the Armenians which took place in this town seventeen years ago. In one department, that of the handkerchief industry, considerably more than a thousand women

are employed, and to these, as they gather in companies, the simple truths of the Gospel are unfolded. There are also educational and technical departments connected with the mission. I had the opportunity of getting some idea of the spiritual side of the work on addressing the Sunday congregation, at service at seven o'clock in the morning. Four hundred people were present, the men and women being divided from each other by a barrier, and all being seated on rugs on the floor.

But what of Terah and his three sons and his two daughters-in-law? And what of that cavalcade which once issued from this town—if it *was* this town—with faces set towards the land of Canaan? Well, there is the great mosque of Abraham in the proudest position of the town, and occupying the site of a Christian church, which church was reckoned by early Mohammedan writers to have been one of the wonders of the world. And there is also the sacred pool of Abraham, "the lake of Abraham the Beloved," with its abounding fish, a kind of carp, which are punctiliously fed as a traditional duty, and are never caught, except perhaps secretly for some officer's supper.

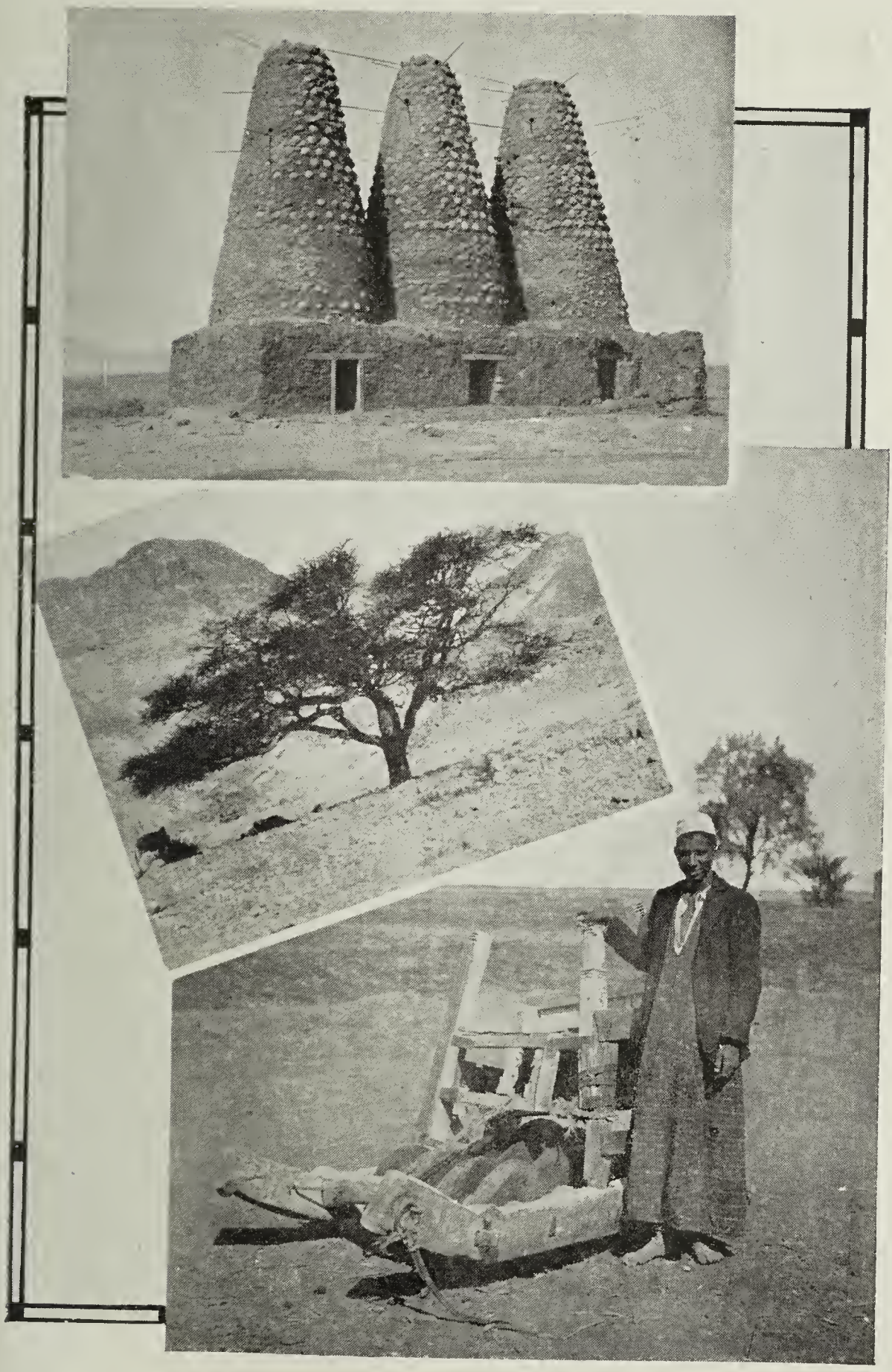
Yet somehow, in spite of all this, one scarcely gets the traditional atmosphere in Orfah. A

site supposedly sacred is not made convincing by any number of carefully preserved relics; its sacredness is rather a matter of feeling, and atmosphere, and landscape. On this ground the neighbouring Haran, where Terah died, and Abraham certainly dwelt, is much more satisfactory. A visit to Haran, when one was so near to it as Orfah, was something not to be missed. A few members of the staff of the mission accompanied me on the six hours' drive across the fertile plains, scattered with dozens of villages, looking—such is the architecture of the houses—like clusters of beehives. In the olden days Haran doubtless had a great importance, as it was on the line of commerce between Central and Western Asia, and in the Christian era it was important enough to figure largely in the Crusades. But the Haran I saw was peopled only by the families of wandering Arabs and a sprinkling of Turkish soldiery.

It is a place of ruin. It suggests that its story is finished. And thereby it is all the more appropriate to the Old Testament feeling. In a city which echoes continually to the tramp of feet, it is so difficult to get the historical or traditional sense. One needs ruin, desolation, melancholy, thorns in the palaces, brambles in the fortresses, the walls a nest for owls, the

courts a lair for jackals. There are, indeed, a few score beehive huts in Haran, all the roofs being built of small bricks which have been taken from the ruins. But those ruins are the dominating thing. Much of them is Roman; they date back to before the time when the Roman army was defeated by the Parthians on these Mesopotamian plains. The irregular masses stretch for half a mile or so. Evidently it was a fighting city. The remains of a citadel are well preserved at the south-eastern corner, and there are indications that the town once had a wall, high and strong, with a gate on each side.

A pathetic picture in Haran is the ruin of what was once a large and solidly built Christian church, which, like that at Orfah, gave way to a Moslem mosque. Both church and mosque have gone, but the crosses cut in the stones have outlived the symbols of Islam. The gateway of the church remains, and a portion of the eastern wall, and one massive arch. Evidently the floor of the church must have covered several hundreds of square yards. The belfry remains also, a hundred and twenty feet high even in its ruin. When did the bells ring last? And what sort of worshippers gathered here? And what is the story these



DOVECOTES MADE OF OLD WATER-JARS SET IN MUD.

THE SEYAL-TREE—SUPPOSED TO BE THE SHITTIM-TREE.

THRESHING-MACHINE USED IN SINAI PENINSULA.

PART OF THE STEEP ASCENT TO THE TOP OF MOUNT SINAI.

MOUNT SINAI AS SEEN FROM THE CAMPING-GROUND OF THE ISRAELITES.

broken stones could tell, of earthquake and war and sacrilege ?

There is no answer, but all is not desolate and dumb, even in Haran. The camels and the sheep are there to carry back to the mind the flocks and herds of Genesis. And another living thing is there, that is, the water. Fifteen minutes' walk from Haran is Rebekah's well. It is still called after the daughter of Bethuel, and the well to which the damsel came was, as this must have been, outside the city. They may very likely have been the same. Four thousand years have gone by, and we have had a glorious company of novelists and poets, painters and dramatists. Yet has one of them produced a love story more simple and touching and idyllic than that of Rebekah and Isaac, the first chapter of which was written here, in real life, at the foot of these very hills ?

And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.

And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man ? And she said, I will go.

And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

And they blessed Rebekah.

Here is the well to which the fair Shemite came down. The water is abundant still.

VIII

A VISIT TO MOUNT SINAI

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LAW IN ITS LONELY GRANDEUR TO-DAY

"AND Mount Sinai was altogether on a quake, because the Lord descended upon it in fire."

There was no trace of smoke or fire when I made the ascent of Mount Sinai. There were no thunders and lightnings, no quaking rock, no awful voice calling from the barren summit, no bounds set about the mount, no great encampment before it.

The first objects I saw on actually reaching the top were the two chapels, one Christian, the other Moslem. Into their separate shrines my two companions—an Arab and a monk from the monastery at the foot of Sinai—hurried to pay their devotions. It is wonderful how in moments of sublime experience anything in the nature of a falling off instantly fixes itself

on the mind, and one of my recollections of the first few minutes spent on the top of Sinai concerns the monk, who had made the greatest show and noise over his prayers. Having finished, I noticed that he took a hearty draught of native-made gin, which he had secreted in his bosom !

Yet there is something compelling about Mount Sinai. Even were it not invested with the memories of the Exodus, even if it did not stand for a great spiritual idea as well as for a geographical fact, it would still be wonderfully impressive. The marvellous panorama that unrolls itself before the vision alone would make it so. On every side of us were rugged peaks of red granite, the mountains intersected with many a gorge and rift. Below were valleys with their beds filled with sand, and beyond, filling in the picture, as an unescapable background, not only to all that one saw but to all one felt, was the barren desert glistening in the sun.

But the overwhelming impression was that of the silence—tense, unbroken silence. One might almost have imagined that the upheaval of three thousand years ago had left the rock petrified in an everlasting silence and stillness, so that not a bird twittered, nor was there a

blade of grass, or herb, or bush to stir in the breeze.

It comes almost with a sense of surprise that Sinai should still be identifiable. In reality, of course, it is not surprising at all, for mountains, unlike cities, are unchanged by a thousand years. But the element of surprise is due to the fact that in the mind's eye Sinai is not a mountain at all. It is an idea. When we think of the old dispensation we think of it in the terms of Sinai. We recall how the Lord of might, to use the words of a very old Latin hymn,

> . . . On Sinai's height,
> In ancient times didst give the law,
> In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
> Rejoice, rejoice: Emmanuel
> Shall come to thee, O Israel.

There is another reason why Sinai has such vague and indistinct outlines in the popular imagination. It is out of the beaten track of the tripper. There are few personally conducted tours to Sinai. Jerusalem is quite familiar to Western visitors, and in Damascus nowadays the sightseer snaps his camera without much discretion. But with Sinai it is different. The Mount of the Law has few visitors, and they are those who have not travelled thither in a luxurious coach such as is available in Egypt

and even in Syria, but have been content to rough it and to call up their reserves of patience and endurance in order to reach this lone and austere but truly holy place.

According to the map, it ought to be possible to see Sinai from the steamer going to India or elsewhere by the Suez Canal and Red Sea route. How many of the countless thousands who have undertaken that voyage have known that they have been skirting the fringe of the history of Israel from the death of Joseph to the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness? The Suez Canal itself borders the land of Goshen, which Joseph procured for his father and brethren to settle in. On the traveller's left hand as he goes down towards the Red Sea is Etham, from whence the Lord went before His people in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. All the way down the gulf as far as Tur, which is one hundred and twenty miles from Suez itself, are the scenes of Israelitish encampments—Marah, Elim, Paran, from which last, says Habbakuk, came the Holy One.

And the traveller bids goodbye to the Bible story at the point where, if maps are to be taken at their face value, Sinai ought to be visible to the voyager. For the mountain stands over 8,000 feet above sea-level, which is more than

twice as high as Snowdon, and not very much less than twice as high as Ben Nevis. Moreover, it is only some forty miles inland from the coast. But although a good many expectant eyes have been turned to the rugged peaks which encircle it, and a good many glasses have been levelled from the decks as the steamer has passed along this historic coast, Sinai does not reveal itself thus cheaply to the casual sightseer.

It was this route from Suez down to Tur that I took when, my calling as an itinerant missionary having led me to the Sinai peninsula, I determined to make the ascent of this wonderful mountain. The journey into this region was not only so fascinating, but so helpful and encouraging from the missionary point of view, that a second will probably be made.

Sinai lies to the south of the peninsula which bears its name, making a sort of triangle, in Scriptural geography, with the land of Goshen, from which the Israelites went forth, and the land of Canaan, which was given to them for an inheritance. On the one side is Egypt with its corn, and on the other Arabia with its spices. Neither corn nor spices, however, suggest themselves in the land of which Sinai is the centre, and one remembers the Montenegrin fable of the angel at the Creation, who

spilt the bag of stones he was carrying while passing over Europe, and the point where all the stones and rocks fell down was Montenegro. The same fable might with as much or more justice be applied to the land of Sinai, where the terrific granite groups resemble a suddenly frozen sea. As to which of the forbidding peaks is the actual Scriptural Sinai, there has been a good deal of speculation. Scholars have never agreed and never will, but it is enough for our purpose that the bulk of opinion identifies Sinai with the mount now known as Jebel Musa.

I should have liked to have approached Sinai by way of Edom and Akabar—that is to say, in the exactly opposite direction to the Suez route, or, again to speak in terms of Scriptural geography, to have retraced the steps of the Israelites as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, instead of following in those steps as recorded in the Book of Exodus. Political events in recent years, however, have made this route inadvisable. There is something of the Esau spirit in the Edomites still, and the fierce inhabitants of this region still say, in effect, to the venturesome stranger within their gates, as of old they said to the children of Israel, " Thou shalt not pass by me."

For some days I had to wait at Suez, both for a steamer and for the permit which is necessary if the monastery at the foot of Sinai is to be entered. It was not waste of time, however, for I explored several of the villages and made the acquaintance of the friendly natives, among whom a dish of ripe dates in the season has much the same hospitable significance as a cup of tea at home. In every settlement I saw the threshing-machine of the Egyptian peasant, which still separates the grain from the ear and chops the straw into chaff as it did in the days of the Pharaohs. Agricultural science is not exactly up to date in this part of Egypt. The *noreg,* as this instrument is called, consists simply of a large box of rough, heavy boards, mounted on a number of wheels made of thin sheet-iron sharpened at the edge. This is pulled over the sheaves as they are scattered on the threshing-floor, and is probably another form of the sharp threshing instrument having teeth with which the men of Israel were promised in Isaiah that they should thresh the mountains and make the hills as chaff.

On another day I saw a queer erection of gigantic shafts, which turned out, on a closer view, to be made up of hundreds of broken water-jars set in mud, each jar forming a small

receptacle for a bird. The purpose of the whole thing was a dovecot on a huge scale in order to breed birds for the Egyptian market. And again it seemed as though a striking Bible passage had come out from the printed page and taken a concrete form: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Here certainly was sunshine enough to make the little feathered tenant of the dirty pots a startlingly beautiful object against the blue sky.

But onward to Sinai.

It took us nineteen hours to go from Suez to Tur, a poor village of fifty hovels, and, once ashore, I went to the Greek monastery with my introductions. Here I spent a night while the priest prepared me a camel, and next day, having been provided with bread for the journey, we made our way across the barren stretch of desert on our slouching camels, meeting no living thing except a donkey here and there searching for something to bite among the rocks, and an occasional company of Arabs. The same programme was gone through on the following day, and it was not until the third morning that my Arab pointed out Mount Sinai in front of us. Even then

we had another two hours' journey to its furthest side in order to reach the monastery, entering at the tiny door, and being received by the hospitable monks who live always at the foot of the mount.

This square, fortress-like monastery, sixty feet high, belongs to the Greek Church. It enfolds within its walls a curious assortment of the old and the new. The most incongruous object in such surroundings is the church of corrugated iron, painted blue. Corrugated iron is not very pleasing anywhere ; it is positively irritating at the foot of Mount Sinai. The interior of the church is fitted for Greek worship, of course, with pictures of the saints on the walls and elaborate lamps suspended from the ceiling. In the apse is a magnificent mosaic, representing the Transfiguration, and behind this a small chapel covering what is said to be the remainder of the bush which was burned with fire and not consumed. The reader will remember that it was at Horeb, which is another name for Sinai, that Moses turned aside to see this great sight, and, like him, those who approach the relic, which is still green, do so barefooted.

At the top of Sinai, as I have said already, there are two chapels, one Christian and the other Moslem. The same jealous division

obtains at the foot. A few yards from each other in this monastery are a Christian belfry and a Moslem minaret. Nowhere else in the world are they such near neighbours. The story of the Sinai monastery is very largely one of pillage by the followers of the Arabian prophet, but now peace has been secured, and the Arabs have a tiny mosque actually within the monastery, so that in the same enclosure the Christian bells and the Mohammedan muezzin call to prayer.

Of the rest of the monastery the refectory calls for most attention. Here the monks, who numbered twenty-five at the time of my visit, though there is room for a hundred, gather twice daily for meals. A remarkable feature of this large hall is the great number of coats of arms which are cut into the stones of the arches supporting the roof. There is also a spacious library with hundreds of manuscripts, mainly Greek. The literary treasures are now guarded with jealous care, for in the past this library has been cruelly robbed. Our attention must not linger over the other things in the monastery—the bakehouse, the flour mill, the wine-press, the olive-crusher—for the mighty Sinai looms above us, and it is this, after all, we have come out for to see.

We made the ascent early one morning—up the three thousand rough, high, shaky steps which lead to the summit. All one's physical and mental alertness is required, in view of the character of the ascent. At various points the way up is broken by tiny, tumble-down chapels variously dedicated—one of them to Elijah, who was forty days and forty nights at Horeb, the Mount of God. A solitary cypress-tree and a broken chapel mark the place of Elijah's refuge. A little plain just before the last bit of ascent is entered by an archway on which are inscribed some characters in Greek, badly worn by the elements and by time. Then on to the summit.

Is this really the Mount Sinai of the Bible? Did Moses hold converse with Jehovah on this consecrated spot? Was it here, so far from any great human habitation, that the Law was given which was to shape civilized society? I read in my pocket Bible on the summit the story of the Exodus, and the moment was a sacramental one, like few moments in one's life. And, after all, what did it matter whether this was the true Sinai, or whether the Mount of the Law was Serbal, further west? One feels as Dean Stanley felt. "Nor can I say that the degree of uncertainty which must

MOUNT NEBO FROM THE NORTH.

THE HILL OF MACHÆRUS, ON WHICH STOOD THE CASTLE IN WHICH JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS IMPRISONED AND EXECUTED.

INTERIOR OF AN ARAB HOUSE, WITH FIREPLACE IN CENTRE.

AN ARAB ENCAMPMENT.

hang over it," he wrote after his visit, "materially diminished my enjoyment of it. In fact, it is a great safeguard for the real reverence due to the place as the first great revelation of God to man. As it is, you may rest on your general conviction and be thankful."

Before we come down from the summit we remember that Sinai has not only its associations with Moses and Elijah, but also with Paul. Almost certainly the apostle stood on these rocks. That he went into Arabia we know from what he says in the Epistle to the Galatians, and as he speaks in the same epistle of Mount Sinai, giving to the reference what scholars think to be a personal touch, one may conclude that he, too, felt the sublime emotion which every man of spiritual sensitiveness must feel when standing on the Mount of the Law.

Several visits to the camps and dwellings of the Arabs gave an additional interest to my visit to Sinai. The Arabs are extremely poor, as they have no arable lands on which to grow grain, no pastures upon which flocks of any considerable extent can feed, no cities to encourage commerce, and no education to inspire enterprise. Many of them live in black tents of goat's hair, and six or eight tents form an

encampment. During the cold, wet season they live in caves.

The Arab women are veiled, and their shyness is only equalled by their superstition. They are rendered particularly unattractive by the way in which they wear their hair. It is pulled forward over the forehead, twisted into form, stiffened by some kind of varnish, and is as little of an adornment as possible. Upon this heavy forelock the veil is draped, and covers the face and chest.

One pleasant characteristic of these Arab people, however, is the absence of thieving among them. Although sacred shrines are dotted about the valleys and plains around Sinai, and to each shrine is attached a room furnished with necessaries for the pilgrim, including mats, water-jars, cooking-pots, coffee-cups, and even coffee, yet none of these things are stolen. They are left unsecured in the desert, and it never occurs to the Arab in this country to rob a rest-house or anything else.

My return journey from Sinai was not taken by steamer, but overland from the monastery to Suez on camel-back. The journey occupies eight days, and is wholly in the seemingly interminable desert. The first part lay across the Wâdy Raha. The word "Wâdy" is here

used to describe a hollow between the hills, and roughly approximates to our word "valley." The Wâdy Raha is probably the scene of the giving of the Law, and the likelihood is the greater because of the brook which may truly be said to "come down out of the mount," like that into which Moses strewed the powder of the fragments of the idol. The plain has ample accommodation for a huge camp, and here, we may fairly imagine, the Israelites dwelt while they tarried about the mount.

Many details of the great plain coincide with the scene at the worship of the golden calf, and it is rather interesting to find that in this place it would be quite possible for any one coming down towards it through the oblique gullies to hear the sounds borne from the plain without seeing the plain itself. And are we not told how Moses, coming down from the mount, with the two tables of testimony in his hand, heard the shout of the people before he saw the calf and the dancing ?

Day after day we continued our journey through the valleys and across the plains, by the side of temples and pyramids not made with hands, the panorama before us sometimes wild and fascinating, and at others dull and wearisome. But always there was the sublime

thought that we were retracing the great stream of history called the Exodus, which emerged from Egypt, whither we were facing, and had its destiny far beyond Mount Sinai, on the slopes of Calvary and Olivet. For Sinai was never the goal of the Israelitish pilgrimage. The current of Bible thought, like the journeyings of the ancient people themselves, is always away from the desert "unto the land that I will show thee." "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount," said the Lord to Israel. But the solitary mount, as it stands to-day, derives all the greater pathos from the fact that its spiritual glory has always been in the past tense.

Occasionally we encountered a company of Arabs returning from Suez, their camels laden with grain, either for their families or for the monks. And we passed numbers of seyal-trees, a species of acacia, standing solitary and forbidding on the barren soil. It was a matter of surprise that the Israelitish carpenters could have handled wood so thorny and hard when they used it in the tabernacle, for the seyal of the desert is the shittim wood with which Bezaleel made the ark, and the staves, and the table, and altar of burnt offering.

A pleasant break in the journey came as we rode the length of Wâdy Feiran, an oasis

of date palms, and the largest and best-watered plantation in the Sinai peninsula. With its palm-grove and its brook, it marks out the first long halting-place of Israel, and some have thought that Feiran was Rephidim.

In the last stage of all, until the eastern shore of the Suez Canal completed my dreary ride, the country became more barren, more desolate, more deserted, until it was difficult to find even in a large area enough of any sort of fuel to boil my tiny kettle. But always it will be a wonderful recollection, this journey through the desolate land which Moses and his people had preferred to the green valleys of the Nile, that—

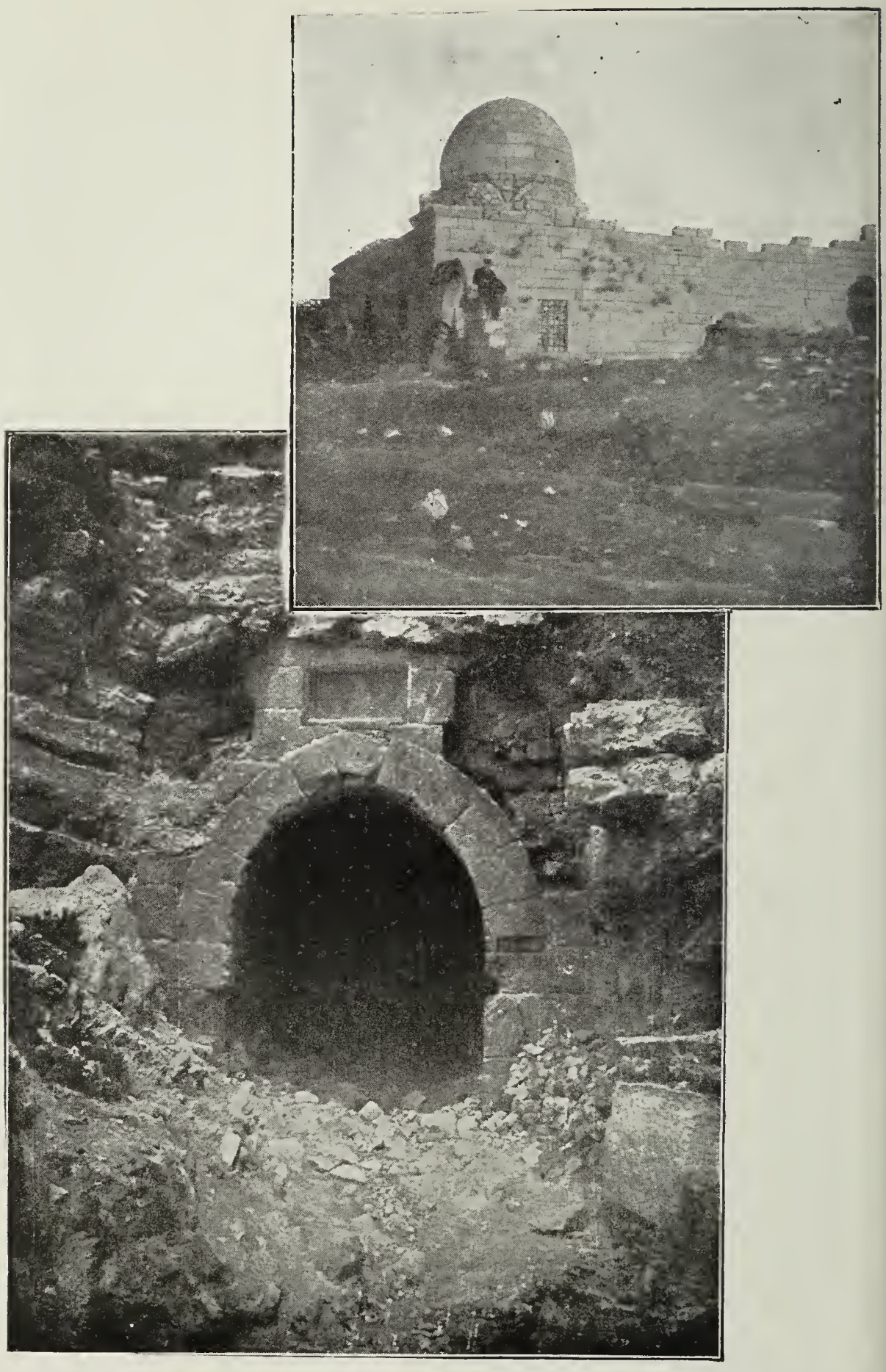
> Separate from the world, his breast
> Might duly take and strongly keep
> The print of God, to be exprest
> Ere long on Sion's steep.

IX

THROUGH MOAB AND EDOM TO PETRA

MANY go west and north from the Holy City; it is the usual thing to do and in so doing they see and visit many places connected with New Testament records and the life of the Saviour, but few hardly ever turn for a journey in the opposite direction, not because there are no places of interest to visit or interesting sights to see, but because it is unusual to cross the Jordan and travel in the lands beyond. Much is said about the fatigue that must be endured, or the danger from semi-civilized Bedouin who are lying in wait to plunder and even kill any who fall into their clutches. It may be the desert that is supposed to be beyond the Moab mountains is advanced as a reason why those desirous to travel in those parts should not do so. But after the journey that will be described in

WATERFALL OF BOILING SULPHUR WATER.



OLD MOSQUE ON THE OPEN PLAINS OF MOAB.

ONE OF THE ENTRANCES TO THE CITY OF KERAK.

these pages the writer has concluded that the above reasons are merely excuses that are made by unwilling guides, who themselves prefer the more civilized life on the west side of the Jordan and the comforts that of late years have been introduced into even backward and slow-to-move Palestine.

I had often wished to look upon some of the Old Testament ruins and sites, and now an opportunity came in the offer to accompany one who had travelled over nearly all the world that was open to him, and was prepared to go as far as the ruined yet wonderful rock-hewn city of Petra, the Sela of the Old Testament, and on the journey down to turn aside and see what was to be seen. We arranged with an Arab to provide horses for us and to accompany us down and back, and having put together a few things necessary for a twenty days' absence from our temporary home, we turned our faces south and south-east from the city of Jerusalem.

The road from the Holy City down to Jericho is called by the natives "the snake," because of its many twists and turns, for only in two or three places can the rider see more than half a mile ahead. The village of Bethany was reached in about an hour, and a few minutes'

delay, in order to turn aside and visit the tomb of Lazarus, which if not for certain the real place exactly meets the requirements of the accounts given by John. As we stood at the top of the steps that led down into the cave at the bottom, we could picture everything connected with that event in our Lord's doings. After Bethany we made a steep descent and got on to the level road to Jericho. A short stop at the "Good Samaritan" Inn for lunch gave us a welcome rest as well as a brief shelter from the heat of even a January sun.

Two hours later we passed the wild and bare gorge known as Wâdy Kelt, through which for some months of the year the brook Cherith flows, and where Elijah found shelter and sustenance for some time. With the setting sun we entered Jericho, glad that the ride was over, and thankful for the comfort and rest that the simple hotel there provided for us. Early next morning we started over the level sandy plain of the Jordan, and in an hour and a half were on the banks of the historical river. We did not ford the river, preferring to cross high and dry by the bridge that spans the swiftly flowing water that soon loses itself in the Dead Sea not far below. The ride for the next three hours was uninteresting, as it was

over the hot and level plain that only ended at the foot of the Moab Mountains.

As we commenced the steep climb we soon saw standing out prominently before us a bold spur in the hills that we felt sure must be Mount Nebo, on which Moses stood and viewed the Promised Land, and on which he died, and as much of our way would be over the track of the children of Israel, we decided to ascend Mount Nebo, and almost begin our journey where Moses finished his.

After some two hours' climbing a path led off in the direction of the mount that was on our right hand; so, following it through fields of wheat and barley, it at last landed us in the bed of a deep valley which also ended with the path. We were well repaid for the diversion, for before us was a scene not often looked upon in Bible-lands, a mass of green made up of oleanders, wild fig and willow-trees, and above them all and leaping out from among the rocks, a beautiful waterfall, which in the sunlight and with its background of green made a picture never to be obliterated from our mind's eye. This was "Moses' Fountain," so named because of its nearness to the mount so closely connected with the first leader of the children of Israel.

A shepherd-boy undertook to put us in the right path so that we might soon reach the summit of the mountain, but it was farther away than we thought and took us quite an hour before the top was reached. Every few yards we mounted gave us a larger view of the fine landscape that spread out away to our backs, and when at last we stood on the top of the memorable mount the view we looked down on was indeed a magnificent one.

Below and in front of us was the wide level plain of the Jordan, and it was easy to trace the river's course by the line of green made by the trees that flourish on either bank of the river. To our left was the Dead Sea with its seeming still waters. Down in its deep bed thirteen hundred feet below sea-level its waters lay blue and beautiful, with its setting of rugged bare hills that terminated in the mountain range of Judea, including the ridge that guards Jerusalem on the east. We could plainly see the tall out-of-place tower that rises on the Mount of Olives, looking to us more like a needle than the great stone landmark that it is. To the north were the hills of Galilee and beyond them the faint outline of Lebanon. It was to us a grand sight, but to Moses it must have been grander. The

clouds and mist obscured our view, but we may rest assured God made it all appear plain and clear to him who might have a view of the Land that he was not permitted to enter.

Turning from the landscape, we gave a short time to the mountain-top with its interesting ruins. From the appearance of the stones and columns they were very old, and probably belonged to a church or monastery that once existed there. We could clearly make out the shape of a good-sized building, which from the columns and capitals that were strewn about possibly composed a church. We read together the last chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, and as we read we asked each other questions that were more real than ever they had been before, because now we were standing on the very spot where Moses stood and "viewed the landscape o'er."

As our day's journey was not finished we were compelled to leave so interesting a place, whose silence is rarely broken into by travellers from the Western world. Descending the mountain on the opposite side to that by which we had ascended, we found a path that led away in the direction of the place that was to shelter us for the night. A ride of about half an hour brought us on to the wide and fertile plains

of Moab, and on mounting a slight eminence, over which the road led, we saw before us the town of Medaba, one of the oldest places in Moab, and passed by Israel on their way to Canaan. We found a lodging in the house of a native Christian belonging to the Greek Church. We were glad of the warm tea and the charcoal fire he set in front of us, but better pleased when supper appeared, as we were very hungry.

The next two days turned out very fine, and we were able to the best advantage to see all that came in our way connecting places spoken of and recorded in both the Old and New Testaments.

Heavy roads, caused by the recent rain, made travelling slow and wearying, and we were glad after some two hours of splashing and slipping about on the muddy track to strike a hard road that led us along the side of a wide and deep valley, the bed of which was filled with fine oleanders, and through which flowed unseen a fine stream of water. For four hours we kept along the valley side and then came out on to a small plain, for I must say we had left the highlands of Moab in order to visit the hot springs of Callirhoe and the old citadel of Machærus.

THESE MEN FORMED OUR PARTY DURING OUR STAY IN THE ROCKY RUINS OF PETRA.

A SECTION OF THE LONG GORGE LEADING INTO THE ROCK CITY OF PETRA.

SHOWING THE GRAIN IN THE ROCK OUT OF WHICH THE WONDERS OF PETRA ARE HEWN.

From the plain we descended into a deep gorge, the path down which was very rough and steep. At the bottom we could see palm-trees and shrubs that only flourish in semi-tropical climates. Arrived at the bottom, we found a strong current of water rushing over the rocky bed of the valley, and were soon conscious of the amount of sulphur in the water by the strong smell that came from it. From off the water rose clouds of steam, which assured us that there must be something unusual about the place. As we went up and down the banks we found more than twenty springs that were sending out strong sulphur water, not far from boiling-point, all of which found its way down to the stream in the bed of the valley.

One very strong stream burst out of the rocks quite a hundred feet above us, and as it came tumbling over the rocks made a very pretty waterfall. Here, then, were the famous hot springs of Callirhoe whither Herod the Great came hoping to find relief, or a cure, from the loathsome disease that had fastened itself on him, and since then many have sought healing and ease from these strange waters. In these days of medical and surgical skill the people of Palestine and Syria still seek the hot springs, and in them find partial or complete relief

from the ailments, diseases, and wounds from which they suffer.

A bath in the hot stream made us as red as lobsters, and after donning our clothes we set out on the steep climb that was to terminate at Machærus, the ruined site of Herod's castle that contained the dungeon which for a time held John the Baptist captive, and from which he was released by the fall of the executioner's axe. We were very fortunate to find pitched near the extensive ruins an Arab encampment. Here we knew we could get shelter and hospitality during the night which was fast coming on, and we were not disappointed, for the simple, open-hearted people set a tent at our disposal and gave us of their best, which, however, was poor.

Early in the morning we set out from the camp to explore the ruins. Away in front of us stood the mound on which at one time stood the castle of the wicked Roman who, to please the lords and captains of his kingdom, had called in the daughter of his unlawful wife to dance before them, and then at her request commanded the execution of the Forerunner of the Messiah. But nothing remains to-day of the castle, save the foundations deeply embedded in the earth. Around and near the

mound is the ruined city in which the Roman citizens lived and died.

Here on this lonely elevation, overlooking the blue and lifeless waters of the Dead Sea, the Baptist spent the last months of his life, and there in the lonely prison he ended his days. This prominent mound in its natural simplicity, and the elaborate man-made tomb in Damascus, are the only existing visible remains of so fearless and great a character. There appears no possible doubt about the certainty of this place; Josephus and others name the spot and locality as the one where the Baptist and Herod kept each other isolated company, and the name of the mound and ruined city is only slightly changed after these many centuries. We felt that we were privileged beyond many others in being able to look upon and stand on such interesting places, thus making the words and records of Scripture more real than ever before.

Noon found us bidding farewell to our kind hosts, so leaving the tents of Kedar to the quiet and solitude of Machærus, we turned SE. and put in a few hours' good riding. Just before evening we reached a wayside military station, in charge of one soldier who put at our disposal such accommodation as he could,

but before long others came seeking shelter, until eleven of us were sharing the space afforded by a room about ten feet square.

We were glad to move away early next morning, especially as we had a ten hours' ride to do that day if we would reach the place that we had set our minds on, and sleep in the ancient and modern capital of Moab. We set out in a very heavy shower of rain that wetted us very considerably, but the sun at last shone out and dried our soaking garments. That day our road lay across more level plains, miles of which were green with the new growth of wheat and barley.

Presently we reached on our right the extensive ruins of Dibhan, once an important city of Moab and frequently mentioned in the books of the Old Testament. It was here among this mass of fallen palaces, temples, and dwellings that the famous Moabite stone was found, with its lengthy and well-preserved inscription in the Phœnician character, relating almost word for word the account given in the third chapter of the Second Book of Kings. The finding of this ancient monument was as important as it was interesting, being another silent witness to the authenticity of the Scriptures.

We had no time to turn aside, so pushing on we soon stood on the edge of the great and grand gorge of Mojib. If a bridge had spanned the gulf we could in half an hour have been on the far side, but "God made the valley, so let it remain," said our man, and so we began the descent. It was rough, winding, and wearisome, and by the time we reached the bed of the valley we were again below sea-level. The clear, cool stream swarming with fish was none other than the Arnon of which Moses sang when reciting the deliverances of the children of Israel. We were not long in finding the ford and crossing the stream, probably at the same place that the Hebrews crossed many centuries ago.

Then came the weary ascent, which took us nearly two hours and which tired not only our animals but ourselves as well. Arrived at the top, we rested and ate our lunch and then set out on the last six hours' ride of the most trying day of all the trip. The sun and wind of the previous day had dried the path, so we were able to make good progress. We passed extensive ruins that perhaps formed the city of Sihon King of the Amorites, and farther on came to a fine ruined temple by the wayside. One hour nearer our destination we rode through

the well-preserved and widespread ruins of Ar of Moab, once the civil capital, and a place that would yield a rich harvest to excavators. The sun was fast sinking in the west, and we were yet some distance away from our goal, but at length we looked down upon the large and imposing city of Kerak.

One hour after we rode in, but darkness covered our arrival, and making our way to the house of the head of the Greek community there we asked the hospitality of their home. The head man was absent, but his son and wife very kindly put their apartment at our disposal.

The name Kerak is not far removed from the Bible name, which is Kir, and means "stronghold," and many have been the attempts to subdue the inhabitants and scale the once strong bulwarks and battlements that surrounded the city. Here probably came Naomi with her sons, and from here Ruth went to Bethlehem. It was to this place also that David brought his parents that they might be protected from the cruel designs of Saul. On the walls of the city the King of Moab, in his desperation of extremity, took his eldest son and offered him for a burnt offering (see 2 Kings iii. 26, 27). Here, too, the Crusaders shed their

blood and reared fresh defences, and in later days the Arabs have fought and contended over the right to reign and rule there. It was to such a place that we had come, and with eagerness we anticipated the morrow.

A good night's rest and an early breakfast of warm bread, hard-boiled eggs, and sweet tea put us in good trim for the day that dawned clear and calm, and that was made warm and bright by the welcome sun. Our host took upon himself to show us round. He first took us to the north-west corner of the city and from there we looked down on the Dead Sea, some twenty miles away. Beyond we could see the hills of Judea and the walls of Jerusalem about a hundred miles distant. Nearer, and coming up to the city, the wide and great valley of Kerak. With this scene before us it was easy to imagine 2 Kings iii. 16–20, for we were looking at the same view as did these Moabites.

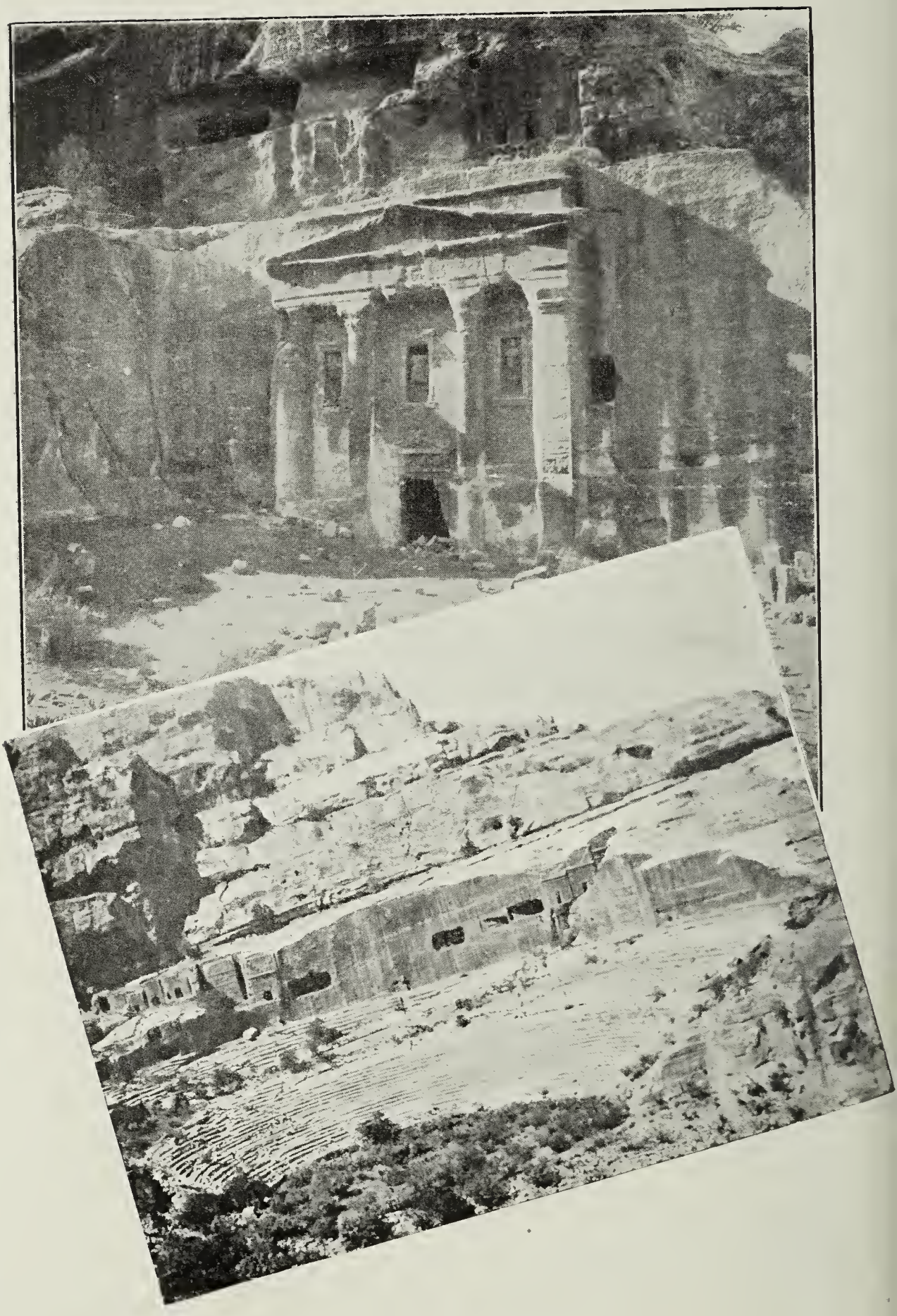
Following the old wall, we came to the massive remains of a shell tower, and from the carved lions on the walls knew it for Crusading work. Near by we came to one of the old entrances into the city, of which there were four, all cut through the rock and each having a small yet strong gateway at the outer end. Two of these tunnel-entrances are in use to-day, and could

be easily defended by a few men. We went through the cutting, and making our way to the top of the city, reported ourselves and our intentions to the authorities, and then went to the citadel.

This stronghold is the only remains of Moabitish energy and ingenuity, and as such should be preserved. But, alas! Turkish laziness and devastation are demolishing the old castle. It is isolated from the city and the surrounding hills by a wide and deep moat, now bridged over on the city side, the slanting walls on each side still showing that battlements once made access to the place impossible. The illustration of the east side of the castle will give some idea of the size and appearance of this old Moab fortress, which had within its massive walls everything needful to stand a long siege.

On the east side of the city we saw the fine large reservoirs that once stored quantities of water, but now going to ruin, also another of the old tunnel-entrances already mentioned. A visit to the boys' and girls' school in connection with the Greek Church, which appeared to be in good hands, brought us back to our temporary home, where we found a substantial dinner awaiting us.

THIS BEAUTIFUL TEMPLE IS A RELIC OF ANCIENT HEATHENDOM IN EDOM. IT IS SOMETIMES CALLED "PHARAOH'S TREASURY."



THE "STATUE TOMB," PETRA.

THEATRE AT PETRA, HEWN OUT OF THE SOLID ROCK AND SEATING 5,000.

As our time was limited we had decided to leave Kerak and get some few hours on the road, so as to make the following day easy, as otherwise it would of necessity be a very long one.

We were now going into more lonely regions and had to engage another muleteer to carry the extra food and fodder that must be taken with us. Our little party was also increased by the addition of a Turkish horse-soldier, whose duty it was to defend us from an attack by mischief-meaning Arabs; his bravery, however, was not put to the test, much to his and our satisfaction.

We left Kerak about one o'clock, well pleased with our treatment there and all we had seen, and after four hours' ride came to a small hamlet of mud and stone houses that had sprung up round an old mosque enclosing the shrine of one highly revered by the Arabs and famous in Mohammedan history. We asked for a place in which to spend the night, and were shown a chamber the walls and dome of which were so shaken that air and light entered without any effort.

The earth floor was very damp, but otherwise clean, and as some sacks and carpets were brought us we were not badly off; the people

too brought us water and firewood with which we were able to get some supper. The wind blew and whistled through the holes and cracks in the walls and dome, and at midnight my companion called me and exclaimed that he was about frozen. I made a fire, heated some water, and by these means got him warm, and then piling all my rugs on him and a heavy carpet he kept warm and was soon asleep again.

The morning showed us that there had been a severe frost, sufficient to make a thick coat of ice on the water in the pools, a thing quite unusual in the Land of Moab. With the sunrise we left our draughty shelter and setting out over the plain steered our course SSE. It was bitter cold, and we were glad to get the shelter of a long narrow valley that we entered and which, after about two hours, brought us to the Brook Zered (Deut. ii. 13) that divides Moab from Edom. This ever-flowing stream is a life-giver and a weleome retreat to both man and beast, flowing as it does for many miles through a waterless and thirsty region. We were glad to drink of its waters, fill up our bottles and skins and press forward.

The next few hours were passed in climbing hills and descending valleys until late in the

afternoon, when we entered a good-sized town built on the slopes of a hill called Tufileh, but which was originally Tophel (Deut. i. 1).

Having a letter to the local official here, we presented it, and were graciously and kindly received by him, and soon told that a room would be prepared for us and that he would entertain us; which he did in right good style. He was an intelligent young Turk of twenty-five years, and was interested in European matters, having lived for some time in Constantinople. It must suffice to say that he was most kind to us and would hear of no recompense.

A good room, with fire, light, and clean beds was prepared for us, and as the coming day was Sunday we congratulated ourselves for being in such good quarters. We had a few walks in the town and saw much of the home-life of the natives, a description of which would be out of place in these papers, but none the less interesting.

Sunday was wet, with a rain that rejoiced the hearts of the people, and made the gardens of olive, fig, almond and pomegranate-trees look clean and fresh in their many varied hues of green. Next day was fine, so, getting our little company together, we set out again, both man and beast all the better for the rest of

the Sunday and better able for the journey before us. But the fine morning disappeared, and when we emerged from the valleys that surrounded Tufileh and came on to the barren, sandy stretch that lay before us we became enveloped in thick mist that hung about us all day. The country was covered with tracks that crossed and recrossed each other, and the day was not far spent before we found that we had left the right road and were going in the opposite direction to that which we should be going. We turned, and by carefully heeding the compass we came at last to the main road. Sticking to the telegraph wires we soon made up the two hours we had lost.

Presently the road divided, and we left the wire and descended into a deep and long valley that eventually landed us under the fortress of Shobek, perched high on a rocky cone. In Crusading and Arab history this place has played an important part, but the few inhabitants there now have not sufficient energy to close at night the only gateway that gives entrance to the place. A few soldiers represent the Government, and they appeared glad to welcome some one from beyond their little world, and did their best to make us comfortable.

We were now six hours' ride away from the

wonders of Petra, and were eager to reach it before more rain fell, so we rose before the dawn, had our breakfast, and were away just after daybreak. The ride was uninteresting until we reached a finely wooded valley in which were some very fine oak-trees, the acorns off which gave sustenance to the wild boar that abound there, and a few of which we disturbed at their morning meal. For some distance we rode along a plateau that was more than 5,000 feet above the sea, and from it we looked ahead and down on the many-coloured peaks of Petra, with the range of Mount Seir standing out dark and clear against the blue and cloudless sky. We soon began the descent over a rough winding road, until at length we reached the small village that is a little away from the ruins.

We had made up our minds that we would stay in one of the many excavations in the ruins; so after choosing and settling about wages with two men of the place to be with us and supply what we needed, we made our way down toward the mighty wall of rocks and mountains that appeared to put a stop to any progress in that direction. As we went on, the way opened, although the valley narrowed, and we no longer wondered why the

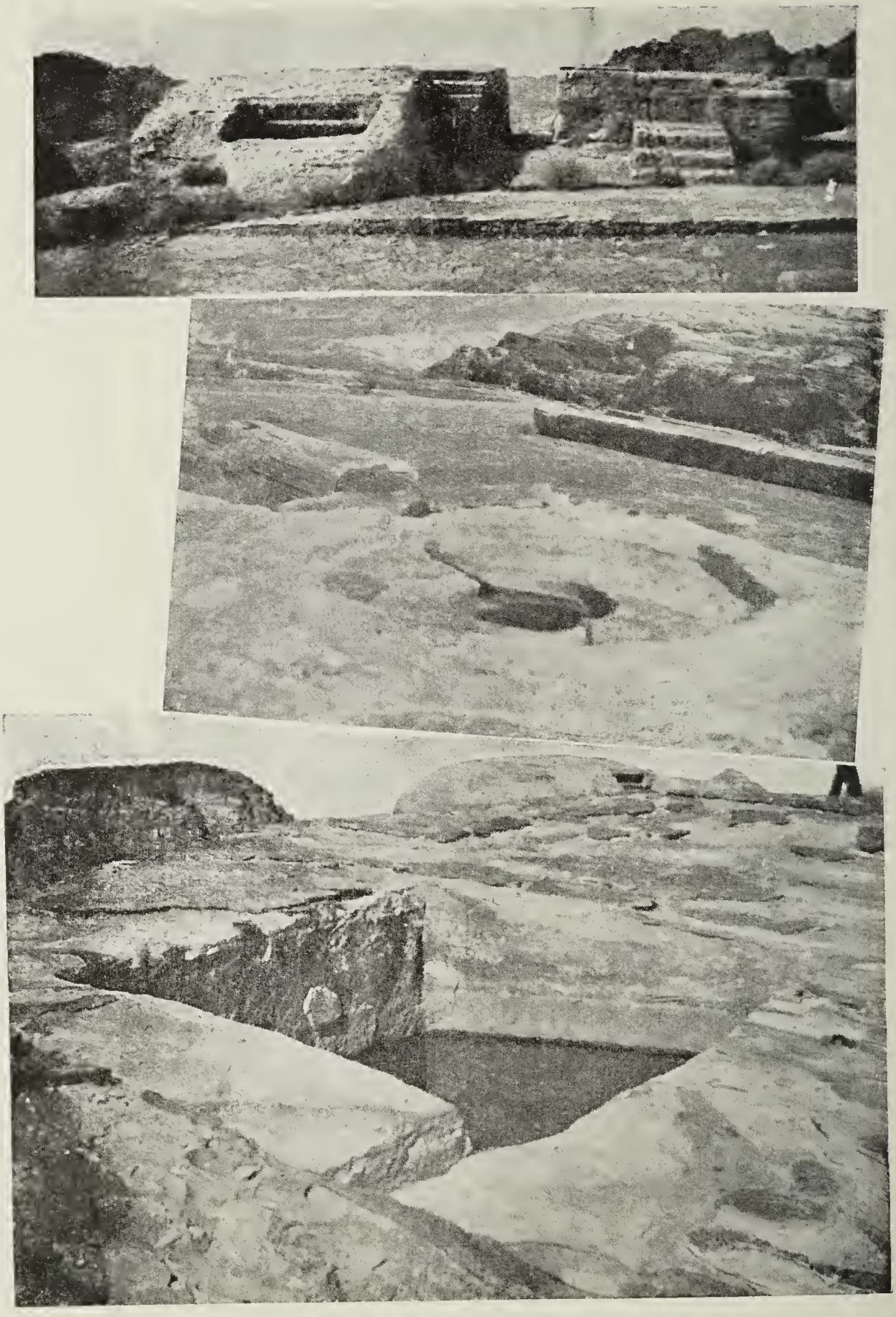
Psalmist exclaimed: "Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?" for surely without a guide no one would find an entrance through the rocky barrier ahead of us. But we did, and a remarkable one it was, though not to be compared with what lay beyond it.

After clambering over a few rocks and riding through a miniature forest of giant oleanders we came to a narrow cleft in the rocky barrier, into which we turned. It was not more than three yards wide, and progress was slow because of the large boulders and stones beneath the horses' feet, many of them hidden under the rushing stream of water that flowed through the chasm. As we got farther in, the walls of rock rose higher and higher above our heads, sometimes excluding the daylight. The many turnings in this unearthly passage kept revealing something fresh to our eyes: it may be the wall would be covered with wild ivy or maidenhair fern, and in another place the variegated rock looked as if some artist had made a palette of it, and had left it uncleaned. Out of the banks on the sides rose a wild profusion of fig, oleander, willow, and tamarisk-trees, ofttimes making progress difficult. This chasm or gorge was about a mile long, with an average breadth

ONLY TOMB OF ITS KIND, WITH CARVED LIONS EACH SIDE OF DOOR.

DWELLING-HOUSE, WITH TOMB AT THE REAR.

ONE OF THE "IMAGES" ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP AT PETRA.



THE TWO ALTARS AT PLACE OF WORSHIP.

THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE AT PLACE OF WORSHIP.

RESERVOIR, TO COLLECT WATER FOR USE AT PLACE OF WORSHIP.

of four yards, and as we rode through it words refused to come to express our thoughts on the awful silence and feeling of awe that took hold of us. At last the passage narrowed and we came out into a small opening shut in on every side by lofty cliffs, and in front of us appeared the exquisite carving in the rock known as the "Khuznee," or "treasury," and reproduced in one of the illustrations.

The rock out of which this temple was carved is of a salmon-pink colour, and the delicate parts of the ornamentation so sheltered from the elements that they appear as though they had been finished only a few days before instead of at least two thousand years. As we gazed on this beautiful temple or tomb, be it which it may, we both said almost together, "This is worth all the long ride to see," and advancing towards it we decided to make it our temporary home whilst we stayed in those parts. We found that it contained three large rooms, the centre one about thirty feet square, and the two side ones that led off from the vestibule each about twenty-five feet square. The height of this fine temple is about eighty-five feet, the pillars, each of which is a part of the same rock, being about thirty feet high.

Our belongings were put in the large

hall, and one of the side-rooms served as stable.

Having got so far settled we spent the remainder of the day in looking at our immediate surroundings. As I have already said, high cliffs rose on every hand, and, with the exception of the rift in the rocks that we had emerged from, there was only one other outlet. This led away to the ruined tombs and palaces beyond, which we should see on the morrow. Having wood and water in abundance we got an early supper and were soon asleep, leaving the men to take turns as watchmen, a duty they are quite used to.

Next morning we set out in company, with one of the local men, to see Petra. Every few steps revealed some new thing in the shape of tomb, temple, or dwelling, and in less than fifteen minutes we were standing before the monster theatre, with its thirty and more tiers of seats capable of seating quite three thousand persons, every bit of it cut in the solid rock. On our right hand and on our left the valley broadened, and the lofty cliffs were everywhere honeycombed with various-sized excavations.

I have already mentioned that the rocky walls of the chasm through which we entered Petra were of many colours. This peculiarity

increased as we went on, and we could not help noticing the fine graining of the rock. Especially was this the case on the exterior of a large tomb over which is a damaged inscription in Latin, and which for the time being was occupied by several families of Arabs ; and admirable winter quarters these rock-hewn places make for the natives of the district and their flocks. On each side and away in front of us as we looked upon these deserted, lofty dwellings, alone in their isolation and desolation, the warnings and prophecies of both Jeremiah and Obadiah came to our minds. We stood and looked with amazement on the literal fulfilment of those passages. "Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks, whose habitation is high. Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord" (Obadiah 4). "Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished" (Jer. xlix. 17). How literally fulfilled: and we are permitted to see it.

Our guide took us up a lateral valley to show us more tombs quite unlike any we had so far seen. One of these, carved in cream-coloured rock, was very imposing. It is seen in the illustration and named the "Statue Tomb."

Between the massive columns are niches in which are placed three very well-preserved figures, probably of those to whom the tomb belonged and who were buried there, for the interior contains three shafts cut in the rock in which bodies could be placed. Opposite this was another interesting excavation of quite a different design and nature. A large portal, supported by side and centre columns, admitted to a chamber about twenty feet square in which were niches and shelves for the reception of bodies, and a small altar on which offerings were presented. Beyond this, and entered through a narrow passage, were rooms that probably served as apartments in which the family lived, so that they were always near when the time of sacrifice and worship for the dead came round. A few steps on one corner of a platform in front of the tomb led up to the entrance.

In another side valley we came across a tomb the façade of which was quite unlike anything we had so far seen, nor did we see another like it; this we designated the "lion tomb," because of the two bas-relief representations of the king of the forest that appears on each side of the doorway, the upper wall of which has fallen away in a curious manner. At each

end of the carved lintel are two well-preserved faces which have escaped the vandalism and destructiveness of the figure-hating Arab. These faces may represent the two persons whose bodies were buried inside, or they may be those of some of the many deities worshipped by the Petraons.

We now made a long and hard climb up through a rugged and grand ravine. So long and wearying was it that we were often tempted to give it up and return, but the guide told us that a fine temple was at the top that we must see. The remains of a carefully made stairway led us over part of the way and encouraged us to believe that there must be something at the top to which these well-worn steps once led. The higher we got the grander the view. The mighty mass of rocks, above, around and below us, with their intermingled colouring and numerous excavations, was, indeed, a remarkable sight and one difficult to describe.

At last we came out on to a level platform on the top of the mountain we had climbed, and on our right saw the object of our long and weary ascent. It was a monster temple about one hundred and sixty feet long, and about one hundred and twenty feet high, the doorway was thirty feet high, and the eight great columns

that adorned the front fourteen feet in circumference, the whole being hewn out of the rock, which was yellow. Both the lower and upper stories contained alcoves in which at one time stood images. The interior and only hall was about thirty-four feet square, and in the wall opposite the doorway was a large recess in which were the visible remains of an altar that was approached on either side by six steps. In the absence of any inscription it can only be supposed that this was a heathen temple, but why hidden away in the mountains thus we fail to comprehend.

The descent was easier and quicker than the ascent, and we were glad to find our steeds waiting for us at the bottom. Our guide had anticipated our fatigue and told his companion to bring the horses. On our way back through the main valley we saw a partly finished work that enabled us to understand how the people of Petra set about the work of carving these elaborate and large façades. We noted that the face of the cliff had been smoothed off and the plan of the front marked out. The work of carving and cutting away the rock was commenced at the top, and the illustration shows the partial completion of the cornice and four capitals that had been intended as part of the

façade. The workmen would cut away the rock on which they were standing and thus gradually reach the ground; in this way scaffolding was unnecessary.

We were glad to reach our temple-home and were quite ready for the meal our men had prepared, and we needed no coaxing to go to our beds, which we did quite early in the evening, more than delighted with what we had seen of the fallen beauty of the once famous capital of Edom, and looking forward to the morrow for sights equally interesting but of quite a different nature and construction.

The morning of our second day at Petra found us ready by sunrise for another day's outing among the fascinating ruins of the rock-hewn city, so, taking with us our guide of the previous day, we set out. We made off down towards the centre of the valley, passing the great theatre on our left, and then our guide turned a sharp corner and climbed over some large boulders, calling us to follow him. He showed us a narrow yet seemingly impassable gorge right in front of us, and told us our way was up there. It was grand to look upon, but sufficient to deter any but experts in mountain-climbing from attempting to ascend such a break-neck place. My companion re-

minded me that we had only one life to lose and could only die once, and speaking for himself he was not anxious to end his days in that gorge. The patient guide told us that the ascent was easy, that steps cut in the rock were to be found in the most difficult parts.

Let me explain to the reader why our leader had brought us to this ravine, and why he said our way led up through it. The day before we had noticed away up among the crags of a big pile of rocks a solitary pyramid raising its lofty peak above all around it, and curiosity had set up a desire in our minds to investigate this isolated erection. At our request the guide had taken us to one of the two ways that led up to it.

We decided to make the attempt, and started, making sure that every stone we trod on was firm, and every rock we clambered over capable of being well gripped by our boots. The illustration shows this gorge, and will convey some idea of the place we had to ascend, and when, after more than half an hour, we reached the top, panting and hot, we were thankful to quench our thirst and bathe our faces with a little rain-water we found in a small basin in the rocks.

After a rest under the shade of a tree we left the gorge, and crossing a sandy bit of ground came up to the place on which not one pyramid stood but two. It was a large artificially levelled rocky platform, about one hundred feet square, and in two corners stood these queer monuments, not stone erections, but themselves a part of the rock, from which they had been separated when the platform was levelled. One of them was about twenty five feet high and the other about twenty, and were neither of them quite square. We were standing on one of the oldest yet simplest places of worship known to exist, and looking upon two of the "images" in which the spirit that was worshipped here was supposed to dwell.

These columns are known to students of early Semitic religions as "muzzebahs," and are believed to be the "images" of the heathen nations that dwelt in those parts about the time of the exodus. The children of Israel were commanded not to set up "images" in any shape or form, because it savoured of the doings and practices of the heathen. Very few of these ancient "images" are left, and these two at Petra have only escaped demolition by their isolation.

We thought this was all we were to see to reward us for our weary climb, but as we looked about us we saw a little distance away a solitary ruin perched high on a rock, so we made towards it and decided that it was the remains of a guard-house, watch-tower, or store-room.

But what was there to guard or store in such a place? The "muzzebahs" below needed no guarding or any stores, so to clear up matters we climbed over a heap of stones to a high crest beyond the exalted ruin, and to our joy and surprise struck a larger and more complete place of worship of a later period than the one we had just left. It was evident that the worshippers that came here had different ideas from those who had worshipped below. The absence of "images" led us to the conclusion that very likely Baal was worshipped here, on the top of one of the highest peaks of the whole region. So rare is it to see one of these old "high places of worship," that the reader will be interested to know what the place was like.

The top of the crest had been levelled for about a hundred yards, and in the middle of this was a court about eighteen inches deep, in length about forty-five feet, and breadth about

twenty-five. To carry off any water that would accumulate here from the rain a deep drain had been cut through the levelled platform which allowed the water to drip into the gorge below. The court sloped slightly towards the corner in which the drain was, so the place was always dry.

In the centre of the court a section of the rock, about three feet by two, had been left to form a small platform about eight inches high. We concluded that on this the priest stood either to conduct the worship or to receive the sacrifices and offerings of the worshippers, especially as it was immediately in front of the two altars. These latter were on the western side of the court and were also a part of the living rock. They were separated from each other by a passage about three feet wide. The one on the south side was larger than the other and of a different construction. Three steps on the side led up to the top, which was flat. In the centre was a circular basin with a smaller one inside of that, both of course hollowed out of the rock. From off the centre and smaller basin a small drain was cut that went into a hole beneath. On the court side of this altar a long receptacle like a bin had been cut, and the grooves round it showed that

they were for a cover to fit in. This, then, was the altar on which the sacrifices were slain ; the small drain was to carry away the blood of the victim and the box-like bin to contain the accessaries of the altars. The next altar was approached by three steps that went up from the court, and it was cut off from the rock around it, so that free access could be had to it from all sides. The top of this altar was flat, and cut in it was a long, deep hole about twelve inches wide, on either side of which we could see small notches in which at one time iron bars rested. This then was the altar of burnt sacrifice, the hole beneath being for the fire, and the iron bars to support the sacrifice. Both altars were in a good state of preservation in spite of their long exposure to the elements. The court was approached on the west side by steps cut in the rock, and this seemed to be the only way from that side. We noticed that the altars faced the east, and the object of the steps leading up from the west side was probably that the worshippers should approach the holy place with their faces towards the rising sun.

A few yards to the south of the lower court we saw cut deep in the rock a reservoir for the storing of water, from one corner of which a

few steps were cut leading down into the cemented receptacle. It was partly filled with clean water that had run into it during the last rains. We could not but conclude that this was the laver of purification which was a necessary adjunct to every high place of worship, so that these ancient worshippers, whether of Baal or some other false god, had a complete place for worship and sacrifice in the rocky recesses of Edom, and the ruin near by was probably part of the home that sheltered the priests that officiated at the services.

We had lingered long over this most interesting place, and at last turned and made our way down another way that led us into other parts of the great ruined city that we had not seen. I shall have something to say about these when describing some later visits in Chapter X. The noon saw us back at our base, and having had our lunch we set off on the last visit we could make, and that was to be to the lonely tomb of Aaron, the high priest of Israel, which was perched on the highest peak of Mount Hor, some two hours away from us.

We were now to go and climb one of the most prominent peaks in Edom and stand upon the very spot where Aaron died and was buried. We had stood on Nebo where Moses, his brother,

passed away, and now we were to scale the mount made memorable by the one and only event recorded that ever took place there. Jews and Moslems venerate the place, and make pilgrimages from long distances to it, but the Christians that visit it are few, and we considered ourselves very fortunate in being able to visit so interesting a place.

Mount Hor is the highest peak that rises out of Mount Seir, the latter being a range of rugged and lofty peaks that lie on the west coast of Edom. Looked at from a distance it seemed impossible ever to reach the top of such a pile of rocks, but the thousands of pilgrims that have visited the shrine have made it possible by having worn a fairly good path up and round the mountain. There is little doubt about the accuracy of the name, local tradition as well as the geographical situation practically settles the point, and in absence of any other place claiming the honour we may be assured that this is the Mount Hor of the Scriptures. We were glad to be told that we could have the benefit of our horses and could ride all the way up the mountain.

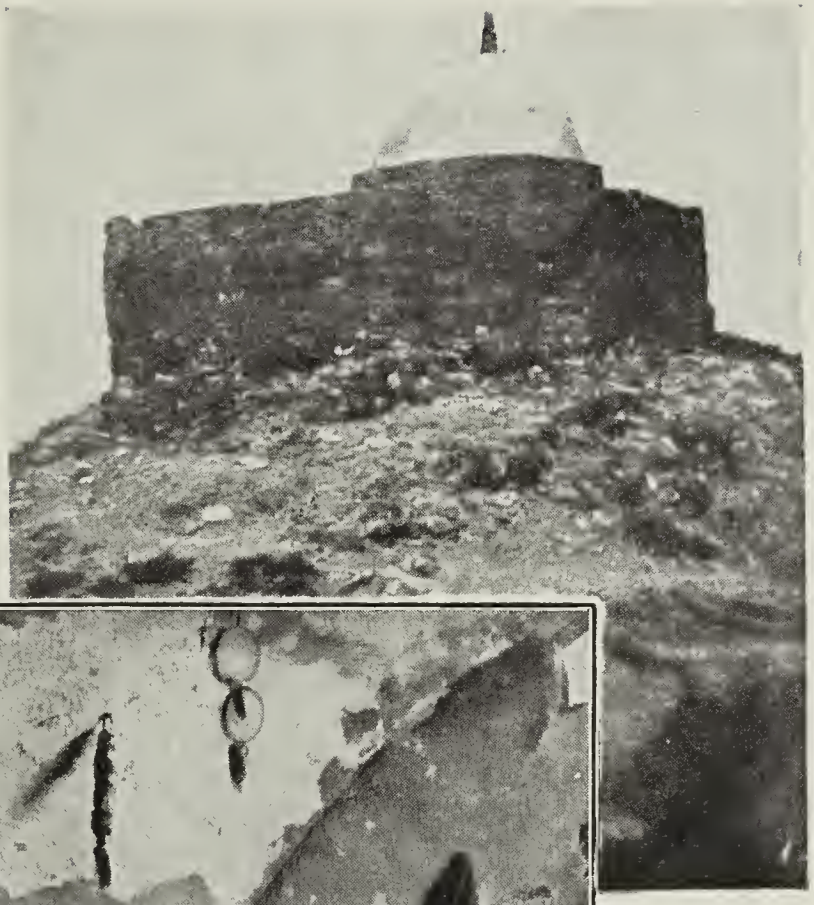
We started about two o'clock and had to ride through and round the back part of the ruined city. At last we left the rocks and

came out on to the plain and had a full and fine view of the mountain range ahead of us. We passed several heaps of stones piled up one on the other, and our man told us they were "witnesses" to the fact that those who had piled them up had come seeking the assistance of Aaron, but because of old age or some infirmity were unable to scale the mount. We soon reached the foot of the pile of rocks and slowly climbed the zigzag path that led to the top. At some places we had to get off and walk, for our own comfort as well as to ease our horses. The nearer the top the rougher the path, but at length the loose stones and the rude steps were all past and we reached a good-sized piece of land that had been converted into a cemetery, those having the honour of being buried there so near the revered saint being doubly certain of a good time in Paradise. Away in the cleft of the rock we saw a stout beam used for suspending the sheep or goats after they have been offered as sacrifices to Aaron, there too was a large pot in which to cook the carcass, a large cistern near by supplied the water, and wood was plentiful. Here we tied up our animals as the rest of the climb had to be done on foot, but the way was comparatively easy, as

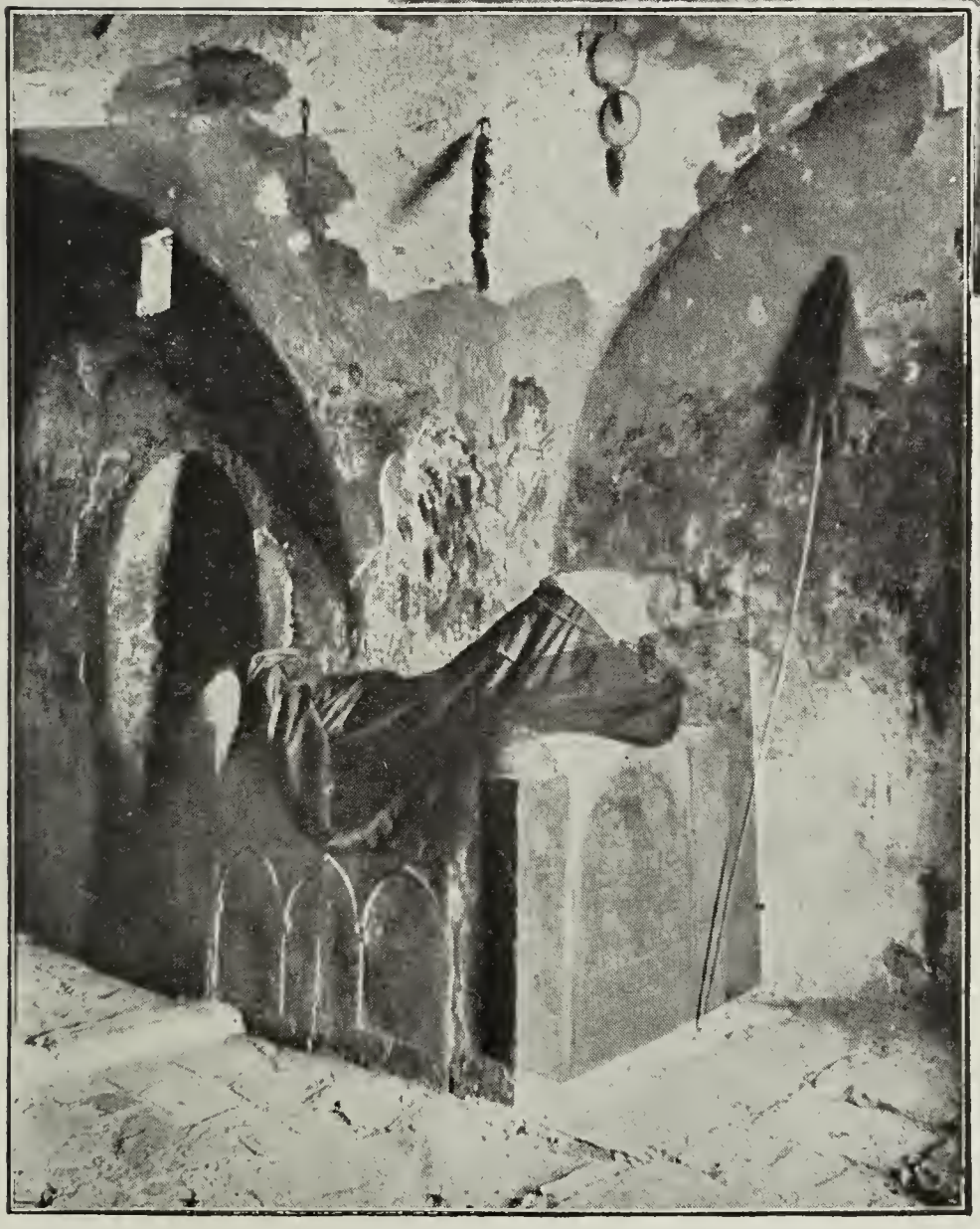
steps had been cut in the rocks over which we had to go to reach the summit.

After ten minutes we reached the top and stood outside the building that covers the actual tomb. It is a good large erection about twenty-five feet square, with a flat roof, on one corner of which is a small dome. The building is made up of a medley of material both ancient and modern, and is cemented all round to a height of about three feet. On two sides the cliff falls away leaving just enough room for any one with a clear head to encircle the erection. The door is on the west side, and through a large hole in it we could see the interior.

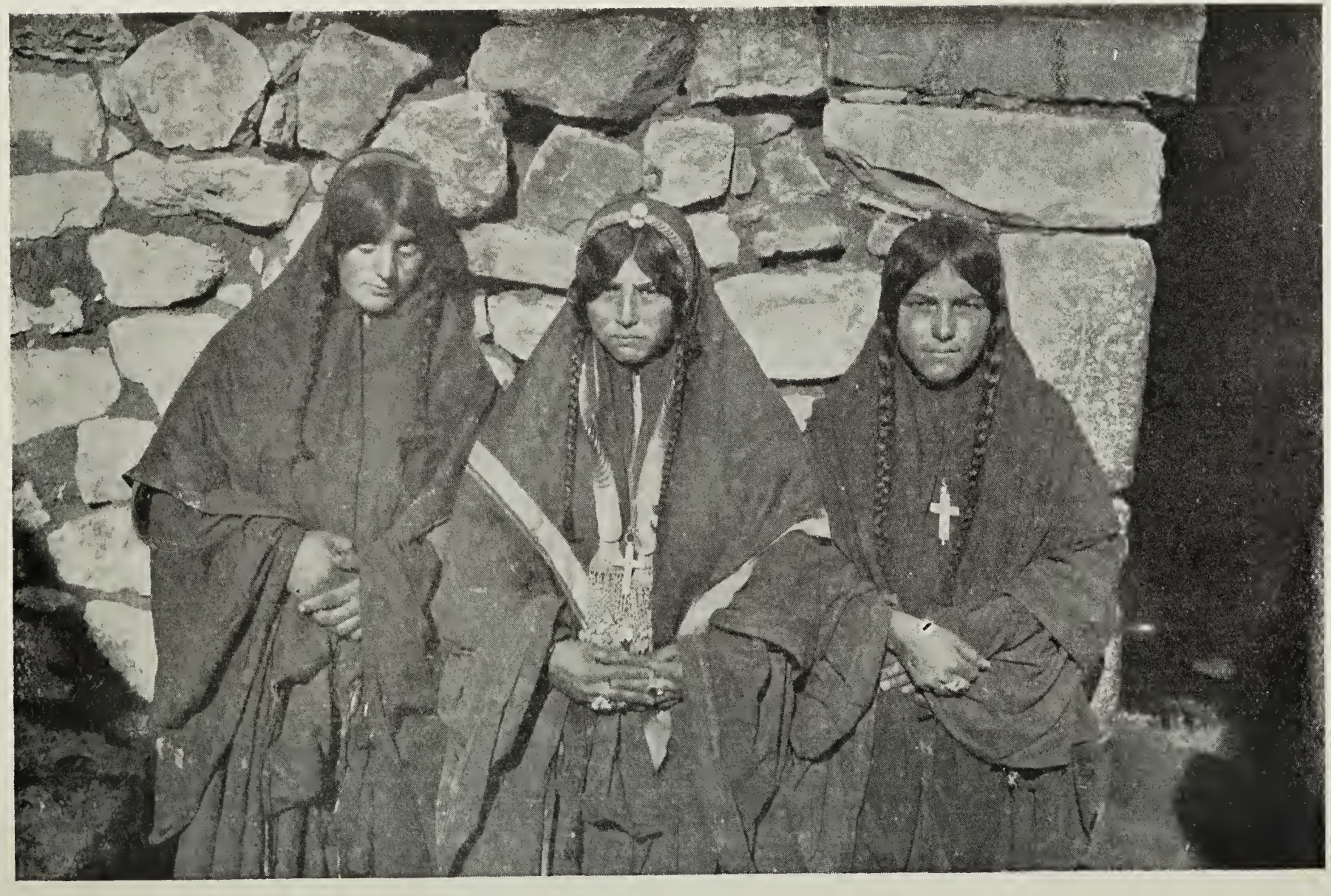
A fine view of the whole country was had from this exalted position; on the north we could see the waters of the Dead Sea glittering in the sunshine, before us to the west we looked away into the desert of Beersheba, and immediately below us was the dry, barren depression of the Araba. To the south were piles of mountains, peaks and ravines bright and striking in their many hues and shapes, and away in the near east we looked down upon the deserted honeycombed rocks of the once famous city, even now fascinating, impressive, and awful in its silence, isolation, and



EXTERIOR OF AARON'S TOMB.



CENOTAPH OVER THE TOMB OF AARON.



TYPICAL ARAB GIRLS, OUR KIND ENTERTAINERS IN KERAK.

ruinous condition. Such a scene is rarely looked upon, and we could easily picture to ourselves the camp of the Israelites in the plains below, and also the little company that made their way up the rugged path to the place on which we were standing—the brothers to say farewell to each other for ever, and the son to be invested with the garments and office of his father. We read the Bible account of it on the spot, and the place will never pass out of our minds. We had not expected to get inside, but our guide produced a key, and asking pardon from God for opening the place to Christians, he turned the lock, pushed open the door and bade us enter.

In accordance with Eastern custom, when entering any sacred place, we put off our boots and then entered. Just inside the door was the cenotaph, covered by a heavy green pall, which we ventured to lift, so that we might see what was under it. The erection was composed of marble slabs and pillars, the latter being covered with Hebrew characters, the whole worn smooth with the kissing of the thousands of pilgrims who have been there since its erection. A copy of the Koran and a few greasy lamps and a curious lot of paltry trinkets were on an old pillar at the foot of the

tomb. Some ostrich eggs hung down from the roof, and the protective power that these are believed to possess would shield the long-deceased saint from all evil, even that of a visit from Christians. We observed in one corner of the building some steps that led down into dense darkness beneath, and our guide, having lit one of the greasy lamps, led the way down. About eleven steps brought us to a thick and moth-eaten curtain that covered the low entrance into a smaller room than the one above. Pushing aside the veil we went in and passed two heavy iron frames that hung from the roof, and then we came to what probably was the original burying-place of Aaron, now covered with oaken beams and large hewn stones, the whole plastered over with thick lime.

We had now seen all, and the fast setting sun told us we must hurry and get away down before the darkness of night set in. So we bade farewell to the lonely tomb and made a hurried descent.

Next morning we packed up, paid our two faithful and obliging attendants, and turned our faces towards Palestine, well pleased with all we had seen and learnt.

X

KADESH-BARNEA AND PETRA

THE Negeb and the Araba are regions which most people know only by name and bad repute ; hence it was with some doubts and fears that we set out to revisit Kadesh-Barnea and Petra. I say we, because I was accompanied, or *vice versa*, by Professor G. L. Robinson, of McCormick Seminary, Chicago, whose lifelong study in Old Testament places and sites made him desire to see for himself many of the ruins, mountains, plains, and valleys that figure so frequently in Bible history. We had both at different times visited the two places under which these lines are designated, and it was the wish for a fuller investigation, and a confirmation of notes, measurements, and drawings, that led us to leave the comforts of civilization and face the hardships of the wilderness and the unmerciful heat of the Eastern sun for thirty days.

Our tour really commenced at Hebron, to which place our small camp had gone ahead of us, we following in a carriage.

About ten o'clock one Thursday morning we left the city of the patriarchs and headed for Beit Jebrin, one of the most interesting and extensive remains of troglodyte times and life.

Our arrival and setting up of camp caused a general assembly of the male population. They sat around in groups discussing our coming, and soon decided among themselves that we should not be permitted to see any of the caves. We kept quiet for the time being, and the men talked on, not thinking that we understood all they were saying or planning. Toward evening my companion and I moved off in the direction of the caves, followed by the most rowdy of the crowd, who were led on and encouraged by the Moslem priest of the village, a very fanatical and most ignorant fellow.

Arrived in the vicinity of the caves, I turned to our followers, and, to their great surprise, spoke to them in Arabic, asking one of them to guide us to the caves and underground excavations.

The priest, with his murderous eyes but

suave manner, said there were no caves to see, and without a special permit from the governor at Hebron no one could see them, for they were all fastened up and the keys in the keeping of the local chief, who was absent. The fellow was so vociferous that he did not consider that every few words he spoke contradicted each other, and only made his case worse and ours better. After letting him talk on for some ten minutes, during which time he had defied local dignitaries, Government officials, and all and every one else, I approached him, and taking from my pocket a note-book, I wrote down his name, at the same time telling him that I should not fail to acquaint the Government representative at Hebron with all that he had said and done, and that he, the priest, might expect to spend the rest of his days in prison for daring to obstruct us and defy those in authority.

The effect of my action was remarkable; the boaster changed to a petitioner, the defier to a beggar, and the liar to a truth-teller. He was ready to show us everything, to be our guide, to protect us from interference, if only I would erase his name from my book. His change of attitude towards us gave me an opportunity of telling him what we thought

of him, and we probably gave him as straight and humiliating a talk as he had ever listened to. The men around wondered that we dared speak as we did to their religious leader, who always kept them in fear and trembling, but who now craved mercy and some escape from what he evidently feared would befall him.

At last two men came forward and volunteered to show us the sights on condition that I would erase that name from my book. We told them it all depended on how they treated us, and from that time we had no more annoyance, neither did we again see the priest, who slunk away, no doubt glad to be free from people with the like of whom he rarely came in contact.

Our guides faithfully led us to the largest and most interesting of the caves. Some were cut far into the hillsides and entered through a small hole. Inside, with the light of candles, we saw dwelling-rooms, shops, cisterns, spiral stairways, benches, and massive columns that had been left to support the roof. Others were tombs, carefully and skilfully worked, one being elaborately decorated in colours with representations of beasts, birds, flowers, and fruits. Space forbids a detailed account of all we saw that evening; others have described

THIS EXCAVATION PROBABLY SERVED AS A MERCHANT'S STORE DURING THE DAYS OF PETRA'S COMMERCIAL PROSPERITY.

ONE OF PETRA'S PUBLIC HALLS, HIDDEN AWAY IN THE HILLS.

THE ENTRANCE TO THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS, PETRA.

these wonderful underground chambers in detail, which the reader can look up for himself. A rising moon told us it was time to return to camp, which we did, our guides assuring us that they would be ready at daybreak to show us more, to which they added a request on behalf of their frightened priest.

Next morning we visited the large caves on the north-east side of the village. The illustration gives a fair idea of what they are like, but for what purposes these were used it is difficult to determine, probably for public worship or large assemblies on feast-days or holidays.

Before leaving this interesting region we visited the ruins of Merash, the Mareshah or Moreshethgath of the Old Testament, and birthplace of the prophet Micah. Here, amid the mass of fallen walls, we discovered an ancient wine-press, which testified to the once fruitful condition of this now deserted hilltop.

Reluctantly we turned our faces south-west, but encouraged with the hope that before sunset other places of interest would compensate us for so brief a stay at Beit Jebrin.

After riding across fertile plains covered with wheat and barley, ripe unto harvest, we saw in the distance, after about four hours, a

huge and striking mound rising out of the landscape.

We hardly needed the information given by one of our men that it was Tell Hesy, the site of Lachish, which sure enough it was. We therefore urged our steeds forward, and soon found our camp pitched under the shadow of the mound. Leaving our horses we set out to examine this once important and formidable frontier fortress. Alas for former glory, all is gone; nothing but the site remains, a hill or mound about one hundred feet high and which we encompassed in fifteen minutes. Where once stood battlements, castles, and dwellings, lentils were growing, and the only striking thing about the place is the great indentation made by the excavators of the Palestine Exploration Fund several years ago.

From Lachish we made a detour to the site of Eglon, which was about three miles distant. I need hardly remind the reader that in the time of Joshua Eglon was an important Amorite city, and judging from existing remains much more extensive than its exalted neighbour.

The situation of Eglon was magnificent, for it covered about half a square mile of rising ground in the great plain of the Shepelah, and had an outlook across the surrounding country

not to be equalled in all Palestine. All that represents this once famous Amorite city is a modern willy or Moslem shrine of some now unknown sheik or religious follower of the Arabian prophet. To this insignificant erection come men and women to pray, believing that prayers offered there will avail more than any offered in their tents or houses. Near the shrine I met a son of the wilderness, whose zeal for his religion impressed me.

Seeing me photograph the shrine he asked me why I did so, and followed up his inquiry with a request that I would not turn the camera on him He said, "You will never enter Paradise, for you transgress the Word, and picture all you see; it is forbidden. I keep my religion and its commands, and if you would enter Paradise you must accept our beliefs, bear witness to the Prophet, and forsake forbidden things." After such genuine earnestness I had not heart enough to snap the button on him, much as I should have liked to show him to my readers. Such witness-bearing to a religion, although a false one, puts many to shame who allow opportunities to pass of speaking a word to those to whom it might be helpful.

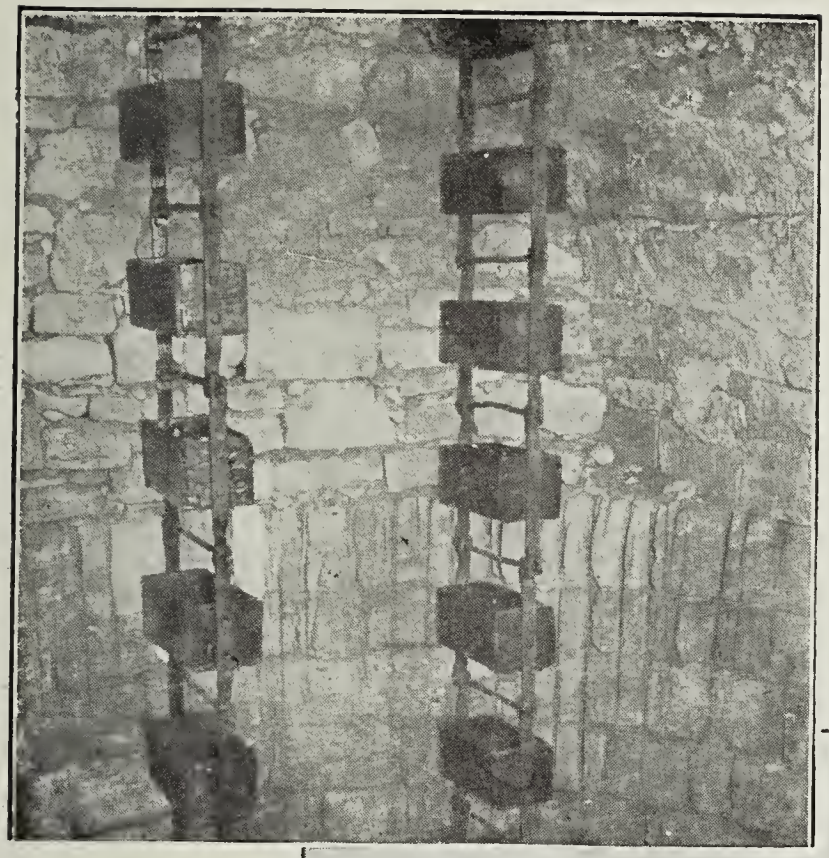
Our next point was Beersheba, but how to

reach it we knew not. We were not anxious to go round by Gaza, and our desire was to spend Sunday at the watering-place of the patriarchs.

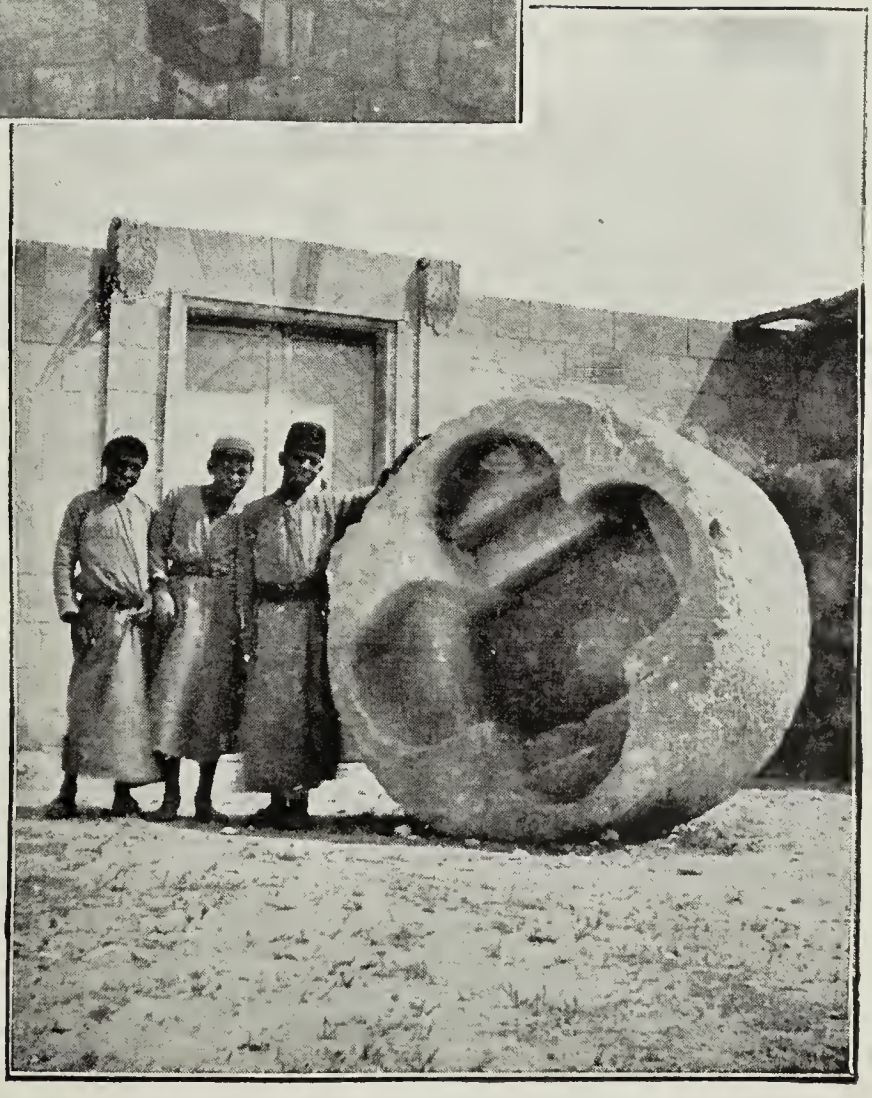
On our return to camp we met a youth who requested from us the equivalent of a penny wherewith to buy tobacco from the tent of a trader near by. We granted his request, at the same time making a bargain with him to guide us across a trackless country and put us in sight of Beersheba; but he would not enter the place, lest the Government should seize him for a soldier, or some one take his camel from him.

Next morning at daybreak he was on hand, mounted on a saddleless camel, and armed with an old flint-lock gun, minus ammunition. For five hours he led us over hills and plains void of paths or even tracks, but always in a southerly direction. Just before noon we halted at a Bedouin tent and were regaled with *lebn, i.e.* thick sour milk, served in a lordly dish, viz. a large white enamelled bowl, probably a product of England or Germany, and the only trace of Western civilization in all that region.

After the tent we came across Arabs watering their flocks of goats and herds of camels at a



ONE METHOD OF DRAWING WATER FROM DEEP WELLS.



OLD BAPTISMAL FONT UNEARTHED AT BEERSHEBA.

THE SPRINGS WERE BESIEGED WITH MEN WATERING THEIR CAMELS.

well, cut deep through the solid rock, and whilst our thirsty animals were slaking their thirst from the cool, clear water, my companion and self set off to investigate some caves which tempted us with the hope of some undiscovered inscriptions, or antiquities of some other nature. Eagerly we dived into the chambers cut in the hillside, but more eagerly did we make our exit, for in a few moments we were literally attacked by myriads of fleas, who evidently from long enforced fasting were waiting our coming. Up to our waists we were covered with the pests, so that for the next fifteen minutes we were fully occupied in ridding ourselves of this unexpected and unwelcome attention.

Late in the afternoon our guide pointed out the buildings of Beersheba, and with graceful and profuse salutations and thanks left us to go our way, whilst he was quite contented and happy to retire into the wilderness, undisturbed by the affairs of the busy world outside.

Just before sunset we pitched our tent almost exactly on the spot where we had camped seven years before, but we were not long in discovering that the Beersheba then was not the Beersheba of now, in point of interest

and visible antiquity. We were out, however, to revisit such places, and were not disappointed in being for a second time at the haunts of the patriarchs.

A messenger from the local governor assured us of any needed help or protection, and later a brief but most pleasant visit to the official himself assured us that we were in the hands of one who would help rather than hinder us on our way through the Negeb.

We found Beersheba very much altered—in fact, I may say, spoiled. Seven years ago it was the haunt of Arabs, who camped around the wells, and from the abundant water supply watered their numerous cattle. Now a modern town has sprung up, with mosque, barracks, residences, shops, and gardens, also telegraphic communication with the outside world. Formerly we saw traces of seven wells, some blocked up, others in working order; now there are eleven, three new ones having been sunk quite recently, and an old one opened up.

We found also, to our sorrow, that all the old stones at the mouths of the wells had either been removed, or so covered by masonry as to be quite obliterated—in fact, any one visiting Beersheba for the first time, and ignorant of

its history, would conclude that all he saw was quite modern.

The old-fashioned method of drawing up the water in a huge skin bucket, pulled to the surface by a camel walking the length of the rope, was replaced by a modern way, that of numerous little boxes on ropes which formed a continuous chain, the windlass round which it worked being turned by a horse or donkey.

Beersheba, unlike many other and more important places in Palestine, has water laid on to the houses, being pumped up from one of the smallest wells, and conducted to the houses through iron pipes; we noticed that stand-taps and watering-troughs were scattered about on the streets, so that man and beast could drink at all times. A 9-h.p. petroleum engine by Hornsby & Sons, Grantham, was doing good service in the pumping line. The growth and improvements at Beersheba are entirely due to the energy of the governor, a young Turk who has travelled extensively in Europe, and who can read and speak Turkish, Arabic, French, and English quite well. Would that all Turkish officials were as go-ahead.

During recent excavations at Beersheba, a very interesting trophy of Christian times was

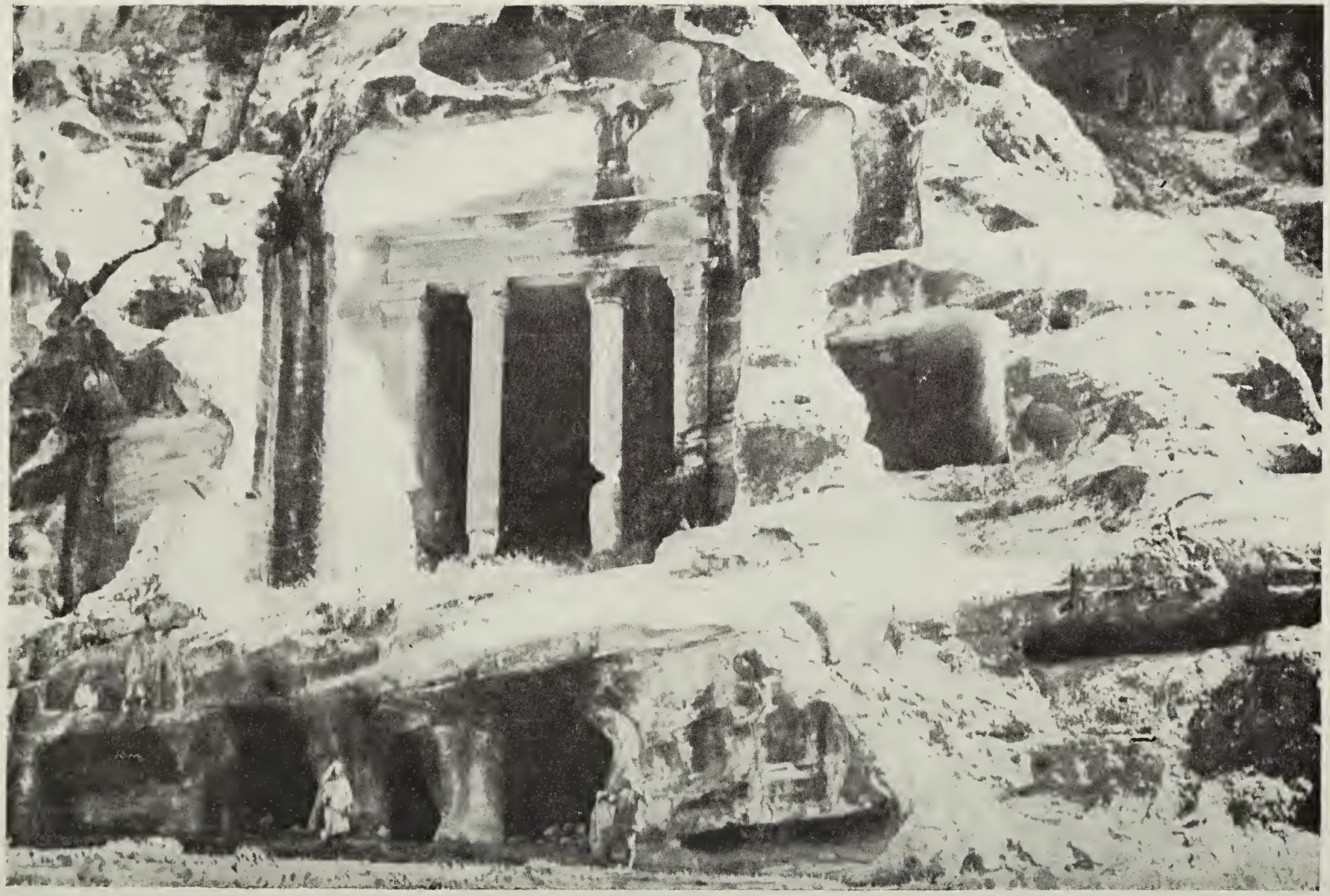
unearthed and is being protected from destruction.

It consists of a large baptismal font hewn from one stone. It is 2 feet 8 inches thick, 5 feet 2 inches in diameter, and on two sides has steps, and on the other sides two seats, these latter probably for the priests during the ceremony. As Beersheba was once the seat of a Christian bishopric, it is not surprising that such a fine remnant of the Christian religion should be discovered there.

We left Beersheba on Monday morning, and during the day visited the site of Moladah, the Malatha of the Greeks and El Milh of the Arabs. It contains several wells of never-failing water, from which thousands of cattle and human beings drink. From there we went to and camped at the ruins of Ararah, among which I picked up a well-shaped basalt arrow-head.

For the next two days the way was tiring, as it lay over plains of heavy sand and rough mountains, but at last our spirits revived by having pointed out to us one of the things that had induced us to face the dangers and fatigues of the Negeb. This was Jebel Mothera, on which some Bible students insist Aaron died and was buried.

THE WEST END OF THE GREAT RAVINE THAT LEADS INTO PETRA.
At the top the rocks almost touch at the height of 200 feet.



ONE OF THE LARGE CHAMBERS AT EL BAITHA.

Of earlier date than the excavations at Petra.

I should have said that, on our leaving Beersheba, the governor kindly put at our service as guide and protector a soldier mounted on a camel; he knew the country well, and served us faithfully.

It will be necessary here for me to make a break in my story, and explain why we were so anxious to see Jebel, or Mount Mothera.

If the passages that record Aaron's death and burial are carefully read they seem to contradict themselves as to the actual site of that event in the history of Israel. I will not contend for one place or the other; it matters little; but the subject is one that interests many, hence my reason for introducing it. Here are the Scripture accounts.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, . . . Take Aaron and Eleazer his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor. . . . And Aaron . . . shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded . . . and Aaron died there in the top of the mount (Num. xx. 23-28).

And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in Mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom. And Aaron the priest went up into Mount Hor . . . and died there (Num. xxxiii. 37, 38).

Get thee up into this mountain . . . and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor (Deut. xxxii. 49, 50).

Here, then, are three definite statements as to the mount and location on which Aaron died, but against them is the following :—

> And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera [or Mothera]; there Aaron died, and there he was buried (Deut. x. 6).

The reader will now understand how eager we were to investigate and try and settle, for ourselves at least, this long-disputed point.

We had seen and climbed Mount Hor, by the coast of Edom, so we pushed on as fast as we could to its competitor.

I may say that the meaning of the word Mothera (and I use local pronunciation) in Hebrew is chastisement or punishment, and this idea is perpetuated by an Arab tradition connected with this mountain. It runs thus: A people once dwelt around its base, to whom there came one day some travellers seeking hospitality, but the people of Mothera treated them badly, adding to their treatment vile and cruel deeds, whereupon Allah (God) in His anger rained down stones upon them and destroyed them from off the face of the earth.

Quantities of round stones on the east side of the mountain are shown to substantiate the

above story, which is evidently a reminiscence of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the fate that befell Korah and his followers as recorded in Num. xvi.

From a distance Mothera presents a most striking appearance. It rises out of a barren plain, and is composed of a mixture of lime-stone and sand, which easily crumbles under slight pressure. The white, flour-like appearance of the mountain is very trying, in fact almost blinding to the eyes, and the heat about the base is awful.

We had intended climbing the mount, as we thought if it could be scaled it would be much in its favour as competitor to Mount Hor, but from the side we approached, the north-west, we found it impossible, and after vain attempts we reluctantly gave it up, sought the welcome but scanty shelter of a rock, and enjoyed what we thought a well-earned lunch. The whole region for four hours round is waterless, and a more barren, scorching, arid, vegetationless country I have never seen.

As our camp was to pitch quite four hours away, by a spring known as Ain Hasb, we had to hurry to reach it by sundown. The ride through barren valleys, and the heat

reflected from the stones, mostly flint, were wearying to us, but more so was the last hour of that ride, for on arriving at the appointed place not a trace of camp or caravan was visible, and we were beginning to wonder what it meant, when my eye caught sight of a thin stick standing upright in the earth, on which was skewered a scrap of paper with the following message in Arabic : " We are gone to a spring east," so finding the footprints of their animals we followed them, and reached our destination tired, thirsty, and hungry, but satisfied with the day's doings and all we had seen. A huge tree shaded us from a full moon, and from a spring that bubbled up through the sand we drew water, and but for the mosquitoes a better camping-place could not be desired.

We were anticipating the next day's journey, for it was to bring us to Ain-el-Weibeh, the springs or location that some have thought should be known as Kadesh-Barnea. Very few, however, reach this out-of-the-way place, and after our stay and investigation we felt that the idea was rather far-fetched. That there are springs, it is true, three in number, but each with a very poor supply of sulphury tepid water, barely sufficient to water our

animals, to say nothing about the hosts of Israel, if ever they encamped in these parts. Ain-el-Weibeh is situated on the west side of the Araba and is only one hundred feet above sea-level.

After leaving Weibeh our way continued across sandy plains until our camp was reached, at a place where good water was plentiful, and known as El-Ghumr. For three days we had not seen a living creature, and we began to wonder what had befallen the Arabs of those parts. We had not long to wait, for next morning at daybreak the springs near where we were camped were literally besieged with men bringing their camels to water. A wild-looking fellow was soon engaged to lead us across the great wilderness of the Araba, with its many paths, and for the next four and a half hours we endured the heat and glare as our faithful beasts carried us across that barren and scorching depression.

Welcome was an overhanging rock, under whose shadow we lunched and rested until the cool of the afternoon, after which we commenced the long and steep ascent that stood between us and the fascinating rock-hewn city of Petra.

That night we camped amid the variegated

and rugged mountains that defend Edom on the west. In the clear light of a full moon every peak and crag stood out sharp against the sky; it was a night never to be forgotten, for the silence was unbroken, not even the voice of the owl or the jackal's cry was to be heard.

Next morning we climbed to a height of 3,800 feet, each few yards revealing some new feature in the rocky panorama that was about us. Suddenly Mount Hor came in view, and as we saw it that morning it certainly was most impressive, as it reared its head, 4,425 feet high, above all the other peaks in the neighbourhood. An hour later we dismounted amid the ruins and grandeur of Petra, thankful that our way had been prospered and our journey so far accomplished to our entire satisfaction. As we looked about us and contemplated a week's stay amid such surroundings, we felt in sympathy with Dean Burgon when he wrote about Petra:

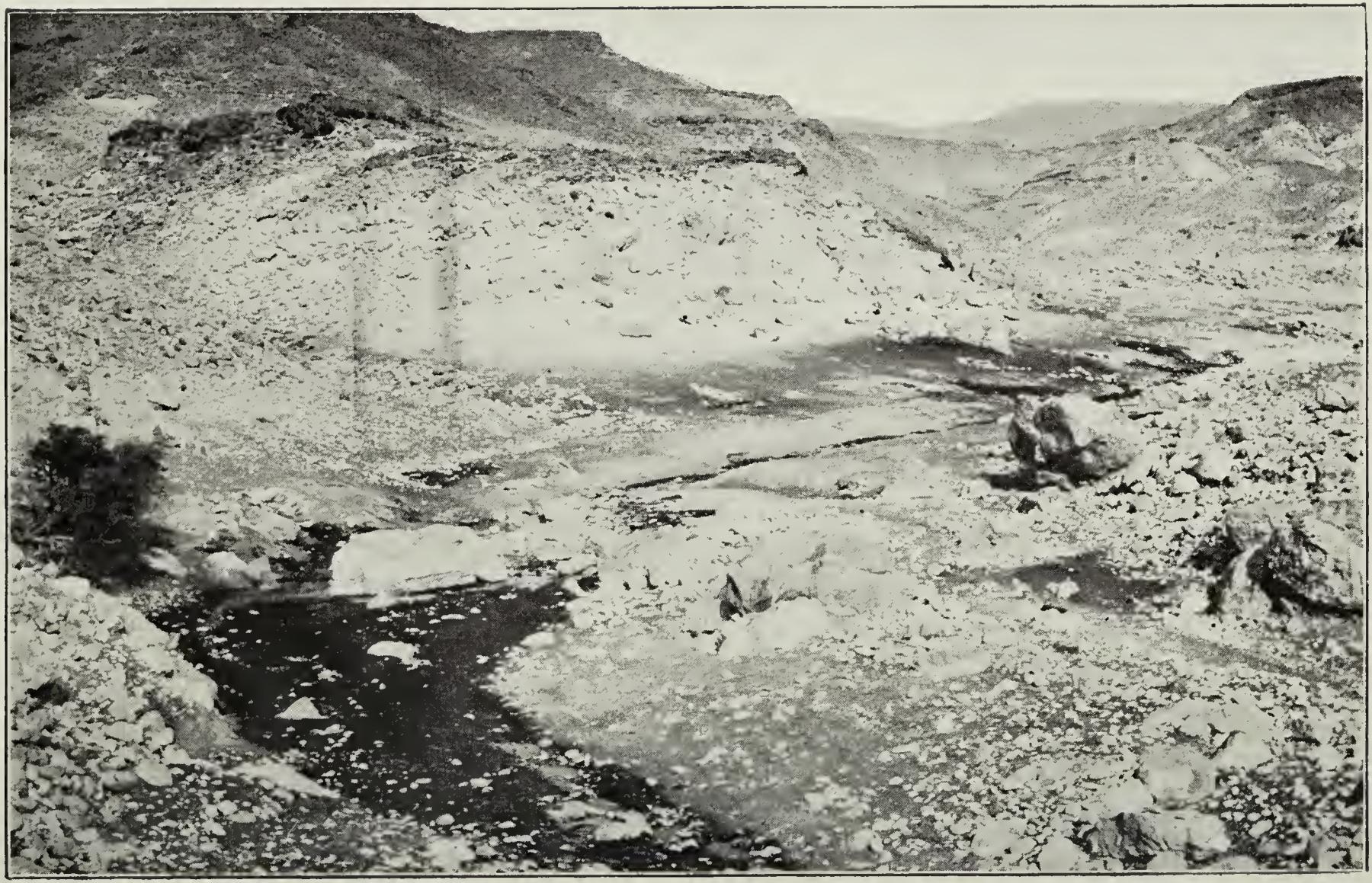
How changed, how fallen, all her glory fled,
The widowed city mourns her many dead,
Like some fond heart which gaunt disease hath left,
Of all it lived for—all it loved—bereft;
Mute in its anguish, struck with pangs too deep
For words to utter, or for tears to weep.

At Petra our camp was pitched under the shadow of what is known as the Citadel Rock,

GRAIN PITS AT BEERSHEBA.

OLD MOABITE CASTLE AT KERAK.

BOZRAH IN EDOM.



THE OASIS OF KADESH-BARNEA.

a magnificent pile of variegated rock rising high amid the belt of mountains that encloses Petra on the west. At one time in the history of this rock-hewn city, a castle, probably a lookout, was built on the summit of the pile, the remains of which are well preserved. A series of stairways led to the building, some of which were hewn in the stone and others built.

Only daring climbers and foolish amateurs would attempt the ascent of what has only recently been designated the Citadel Rock, for one false step would mean a fall over sharp crags into an unmerciful abyss beneath.

Although I had been six times to Petra I found there was much that I had not seen before, and the probability is that another visit would reveal something new. Any readers who are interested in ancient Semitic worship will know that Petra has of late years become famous because of the high places of worship that have been discovered there, and which have led not a few to make the journey thither in hopes of gaining fresh light on the religion and worship of the ancients.

We too were intent on high places, and were rewarded for some amount of hard climbing in finding and seeing six that were unknown

to us. We found that they were all constructed on the same principle, and consisted of altars, courts, reservoirs for water, and bell-shaped niches cut in the rock, which some think represent the obelisks that are found at the great high place, which was the first we discovered (see page 137).

We concluded ere we left Petra that each quarter of the city had one or more of these resorts for worship, and that at given times all would go to the great sanctuary to sacrifice and worship.

As we crossed and recrossed the mounds of débris and fallen buildings, we would come across large blocks of stone on which were carved the figures of men and beasts. These, no doubt, were parts of some temple or palace, and the figures representions of gods or warriors. The illustration shows some of this old-time carving, representing a winged lion on either side of a diminutive human being also having wings.

No doubt excavation would reveal many such things, and probably inscriptions also, which would prove of immense value in throwing light on this long-silent and fascinating metropolis of Edom.

The Roman occupation of Petra could not

be overlooked, for a few hand-mills had been discovered and were lying about on the surface, no one having any use for them.

They are cut from basalt, as are the hand-mills of the present day, but are different in shape and considerably larger. From their shape and construction we concluded that they were turned by handles stuck into holes on the sides, not on top as in modern hand-mills, the under part being raised considerably. The weight of the upper stone would make it impossible for an ordinary man or woman to revolve it, hence the reason for the two handles. The durability of black basalt is very apparent in these Roman mills, for after years of use and centuries of exposure, they are very well preserved.

So far we have been moving in the bed of the valley, with its wealth of interest to the geologist, botanist, archæologist, naturalist, or most common everyday student of things; but the mountains are also full of interest, and thither we will go.

As we climb up zigzag stairs hewn in the rock, or walk slowly up well-graded roads cut through the stone, we wonder at the great amount of labour and energy put forth by the Petreans to reach the hill and mountain-tops,

largely in the interest of worship and religion. As I stood upon a rocky promontory looking around and below, I saw what appeared to be an altar hidden away in the cleft of a rock. We were not long finding our way to it, and were delighted to discover a large altar in a perfect state of preservation. Its dimensions may be of interest to some readers, so I will give them, according to our measurements: height 5 feet 8 inches, width 2 feet 3 inches, depth or thickness 22½ inches, top 2 feet across, base 3 feet 1 inch.

As will be seen from the illustration, it was not detached from the rock, as are many altars, neither did we find any trace of inscriptions on it to tell to whom or what deity it was dedicated. We were also much surprised and interested in noting that the altar stood due north and south, whereas every other altar that we saw at Petra was placed east and west. We could not but conclude that it belonged to a people and time foreign to the Petreans, else why these very noticeable differences?

Not far removed from this relic of ancient worship, we found something else of interest, although of quite a different nature. Partly hidden by the foliage of a very old karub-tree, and hewn into and out of a large rock, was

what appeared to us to be the remains of a hall of statuary or a hall of assembly. Its complete dimensions could not be determined, as one end had suffered considerably from the elements and had fallen away. What remains is about 40 feet long by 20 feet broad. Cut in the walls on either side are niches, each capable of holding a life-size statue; these were about sixteen in number. There was every appearance that at some time the place was roofed in, for on either side were rests cut in the rocky wall, on which arches could be sprung, whilst at the end the height and dimensions of the arch are plainly seen, as it apparently fitted into a groove cut in the end wall. The photograph reproduced plainly shows these details of what was once a place of importance at Petra.

On another of our rambles of exploration we came across a very fine excavation which at one time must have had a very striking appearance. The grain in the rock over the doorway was very marked, and gave an added beauty to the cornice and carving that graced the exterior of what we eventually called the magazine. The interior, which is about twenty-five feet square, was quite plain, but the walls had recesses cut in them which we concluded

were for the storage of grain or merchandize, for at one time Petra was a great centre of commercial enterprise, and store-rooms were a necessity. This chamber is used during the rainy season to shelter the flocks from the winds and storms, and is usually occupied by a Bedouin family during the summer.

We made several visits to the great temple known as the Deir, which is located in the western mountains, but which is only reached after a most fatiguing climb of about one hour. We did not rest until we stood underneath the massive urn that crowns this monstrous rock-hewn sanctuary, and which indeed in all its wonderful workings is a part of the same rock. The platform from which this great urn rises is 129 feet in circumference, whilst the urn itself rises to a height of about thirty feet. When it is remembered that this urn is a part of the same rock as the great temple beneath, and is so carved as not to have one crack in it, we cannot but wonder at and admire the enterprise and ingenuity of these rock-workers of twenty centuries ago. What people now-adays would attack a mountain to get a church out of it?

Some part of our time at Petra was given to the grand ravine known as the Sik. It is

the fascinating, awe-inspiring gorge that gives access to the city from the east, and which at one time formed an almost impassable barrier to the rock-hewn capital. This ravine is about a mile long, and has some very impressive bits of scenery in it, but none so charming as the last hundred yards at the west end, with its variety of colour and grain in the rock, and the outlines of the exquisitely-carved Khuznee, Petra's masterpiece, beyond.

Whilst the western end of the Sik fascinates one with its delicate charms and exquisite carvings, the eastern end is equally attractive with its solidity and white, sponge-like, dome-shaped rocks rising one above the other. Here, too, is hidden away the most stupendous work the early inhabitants of Petra ever undertook and carried through. So completely is it out of sight that the traveller in his eagerness to reach the city beyond has no idea of turning aside to investigate in so uninviting a part. This new item among the wonders of Petra consists of a tunnel, 300 feet long, 18 to 20 feet wide, and about 23 feet high, cut through a rock and leading out into an almost impassable valley beyond. But why such a cutting, some will ask? After studying the situation we concluded that this work was done to make

a way of escape for the torrents that must have come rushing down the valleys and mountain-sides after heavy rains, and which if allowed to enter Petra would have done considerable damage to the city, but by being turned into this valley through the tunnel, the overflow found its way down into the Araba, and probably into the Dead Sea.

We were much interested in the local name of this tunnel and valley as given us by the two youths who accompanied us on all our trips about Petra. They called it Wâdy Muthlum—which means, the Valley of Shadows ; and with such a designation how real the words of Psalm xxiii. seemed—" Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death." Truly one has to live in Bible lands to realize the full meaning of Bible language.

Whilst at Petra we went over to Māān, some twenty-five miles east. It has been thought by some that Teman was located where Māān now stands.

One of our objects in going was to request from the governor there permission to visit the shrine of Aaron on the summit of Mount Hor, a privilege only granted by the authorities in whose district the place is. The ignorant fanaticism of the Arabs makes them obstruct

the Christian visiting the shrine, but with a Government permit all goes easy. The governor of the district readily gave us the permission in writing, which, however, we did not use, although we visited the shrine. The translation of this important document, written in Arabic, and bearing the seal of the Khimakan of Māān, is given here for the benefit of those who read these lines.

It as follows :—

Written to the chiefs and people of Wâdy Musa, *i.e.* Petra. The bearers of this permit are going to Wâdy Musa, wanting to ascend Mount Aaron, on whom be peace. Let no one hinder them, and if any man interferes with them he will fall under punishment.

Armed with this document we returned to Petra and visited the prophet, to use a local and literal phrase. Aaron's tomb and Mount Hor were fully described on page 144 in an account of a previous visit. One experience was new to me, and that was getting into the sacred cistern, from which water was drawn to use with the sacrifices slain at the shrine. To my surprise I found only a few inches of water in it, although the old caretaker had said there was plenty, so much that I could not possibly get into the cistern for fear of drowning.

The reservoir is evidently old, as shown by its construction, viz. arches about two feet apart on which rested slabs of stone to form the roof. The cistern was hewn in the rock, in which were rests from which the numerous arches were sprung. I brought away one negative of the interior of the cistern which will give some idea of its aspect as we saw it when nearly empty.

We had been ten days amid the fascinations of Petra, and as our time was limited were obliged to leave. We had seen many new things, some of which I have tried to picture, I trust not in vain. As we took a last look at the rock-encircled city with its variety of colour, carvings, and excavations, we remembered how appropriate was Burgon's poem on Petra when he said :

> It seems no work of man's creative hand,
> By labour wrought as wavering fancy planned,
> But from the rock, as if by magic grown,
> Eternal, silent, beautiful, alone.
> Not virgin-white like that old Doric shrine
> Where erst Athena held her rites divine,
> Not saintly grey, like many a minster fane,
> That crowns the hill, and consecrates the plain ;
> But rosy red, as if the blush of dawn
> That first beheld them were not yet withdrawn,
> The hues of youth upon a brow of woe,
> Which man deemed old two thousand years ago ;
> Match me such marvel save in Eastern clime,
> A rose-red city half as old as Time.

From Petra we started north, taking in on our way towards the steep climb to the highlands the Horite excavations at El-Baitha, which bear every trace of being much older than those at Petra.

The style of the work in the valley of El-Baitha is simpler than that of its neighbour, and some who have examined them incline to the idea that the large chambers, void of decoration, were used as stores or inns, and were frequented by the traders and caravans who for business purposes were not permitted to enter the city near by. The rock here is almost entirely grey, and from a distance has the appearance of pumice-stone.

For two hours we climbed slowly up toward the plains of Edom, on our way passing some wild-looking fellows watering sheep at a spring of cool, clear water that came gushing out of a rock. On reaching the top of the hill we suddenly entered a forest of oak-trees, the shade of which was most welcome after the heat and glare of the valley beneath.

After riding for three hours across plains of wheat and barley, the finest we had seen during our trip, we reached the little town of Shobek, perched high on the hill that makes it a miniature fortress. Shobek has a fine supply of water,

which is responsible for the luxurious gardens in the valley below. In the middle of the little town is a depression from which more than three hundred steps, roughly cut in the rock, lead down to a spring of ice-cold water. It was from this that the people of Shobek drew water, when a few years ago they withstood the attack of Turkish troops for over two months.

From Shobek we went to the highest point we reached in our journeyings, a spur in the mountains above the village of Dana, and our barometers told us that we were 5,200 feet above sea-level. Here we pitched our camp at about noon.

Not far away was Bozrah, a town memorialized by its mention by the prophet Isaiah in chapter lxiii., " Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? "

This connexion with the Old Testament made us desirous of visiting the place and seeing for ourselves how the prophecies concerning the town had been fulfilled, for Jeremiah, as the mouthpiece of the Lord, said, " that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, a curse, and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes."

How fully all had come to pass ! Even we

saw, in some measure, the fulfilment of the above prediction.

On asking some men if we could buy barley in the town, they replied, "No, anywhere but in Bozrah; they are a lazy lot and only sow enough for themselves." A reproach.

As we neared the town and traversed its crooked streets, we saw nothing but tumble-down walls and apologies for houses. There was nothing that indicated energy, industry, or trade. In fact, as we saw it, Bozrah was indeed a desolation.

The state of the few inhabitants was pitiful. I went up to an open door and asked for a drink of water. The reply came from a poor woman lying on the mud floor, partly covered by a dirty torn quilt, "We have no water; no one here is able to go to the spring, for we are all ill and no one comes to help us." As I entered and looked about I saw the husband, a grandmother, and four children lying about, all evidently very ill and in need, but from where was help to come, for nearly all the villagers were down with what appeared to me typhoid fever? Bozrah seemed to have become indeed and in truth a curse.

We left the stricken town, feeling sad because no medical help was available for the people

and wondering how it was that among all the societies for evangelizing and helping needy Christless nations, not one had sent its agents to bring hope, relief, and cheer to the helpless thousands of Edom. The appeal to us was a strong one, and we wished that we could have done something. When the Church of Christ is faithful to her Lord's commission, such cases, even in Moslem lands, so sadly neglected, will not remain long without Christian sympathy and help.

Having purchased barley for five days, we started on another stage of wilderness journeying.

We turned due west and commenced the descent through the Edom range down into the Araba again, for a second visit to Jebel Mothera. A fresh investigation of Kadesh-Barnea had been decided on.

After two hours of slow travelling over a good path that led round the sides of the hills, we suddenly came upon a large encampment in which the Arabs were busy milking their goats, before sending them out to pasture for the day.

We made a brief halt before one of the tents, into which we were invited to enter and have breakfast, which we refused with all

the thanks and compliments that we could command.

Meanwhile our muleteers had made the most of the opportunity to imbibe all the *lebn* and buttermilk that they were able to. From the women we bought freshly churned butter for use on our journey.

In this camp I saw a woman churning in a style entirely new to me. Instead of having the skin of milk suspended on a tripod, she had it over her knee, and by rocking it backwards and forwards she eventually obtained butter. This would be hard work for a woman of the Occident, but these daughters of the wilderness are quite at home doing such work, having been accustomed to it from girlhood.

Five hours more brought us to the edge of the great depression that divides Palestine from Arabia, viz., the Araba. We had come down over five thousand feet, and had ridden over what appeared to us to have been at one time a broad, well-graded road, and so imperceptible was the decline that we hardly realized what a drop we had made in so short a time.

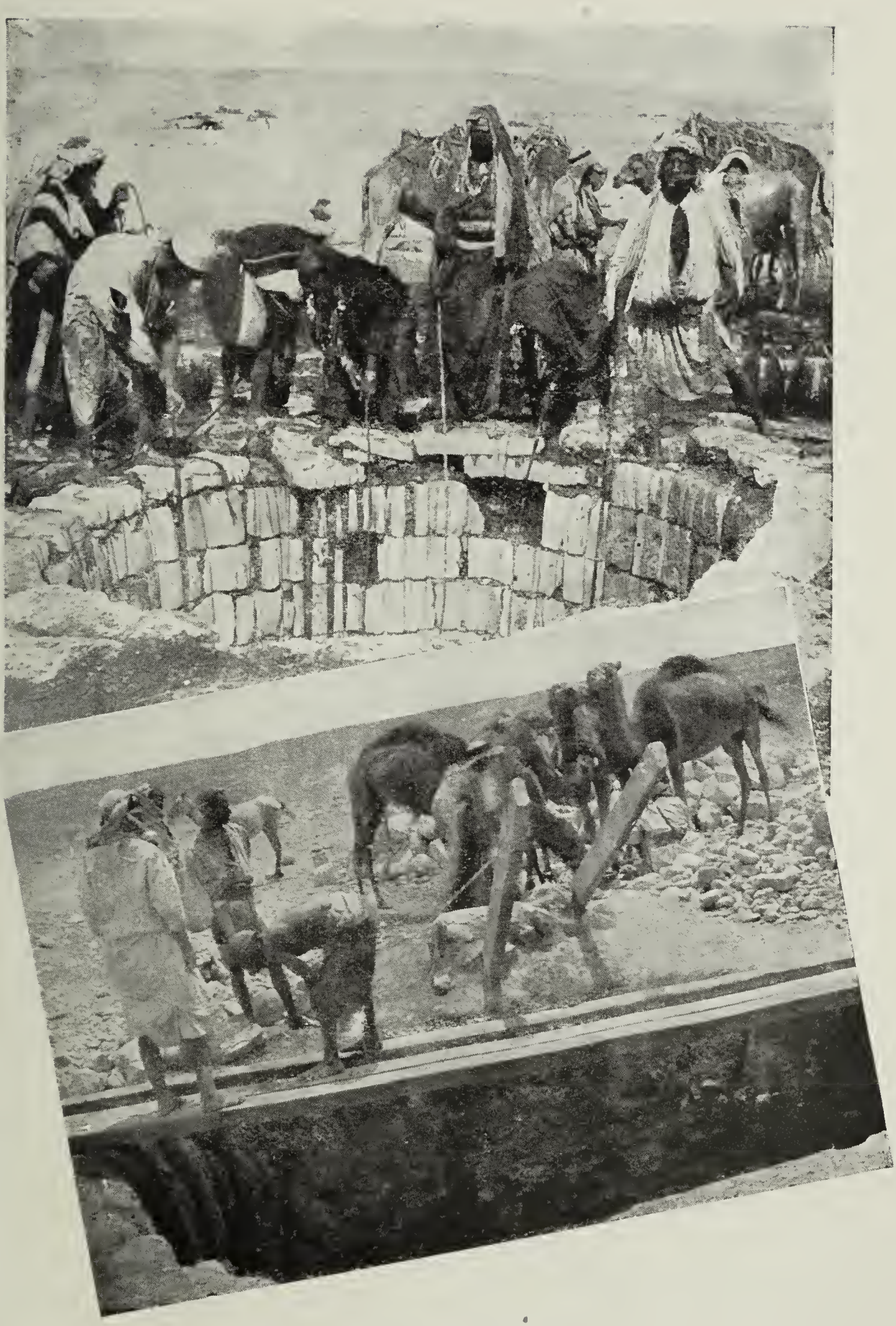
After looking at maps and thinking the matter out, we decided that probably we had

traversed the king's highway mentioned in connexion with the journeyings of the Israelites (Num. xx. 17, and Deut. ii. 27). For there is no doubt that at one time the main road between Egypt and Arabia, via Edom, led through these valleys and around these hills, and the children of Israel, knowing of this highway to the uplands of Edom, desired to traverse it and so get into Canaan.

Four hours brought us to our old camping-ground at Ain Hasb, and four hours next morning brought us to the south side of Jebel Mothera, which from our new standpoint presented quite a different appearance, and gave us fresh hopes of standing on its summit.

We sent our baggage animals ahead to await us at a spring, whilst my companion, our guide and guard, and myself made for the mountain. We were able to ride right up to its base, and found the formation at the west end quite different from that of the east end. We judged the mountain to be fully half a mile long, and at each end on top was quite a plain, the space between these having either fallen away or been washed away by the rains of centuries, leaving a narrow rugged ridge between the two platforms.

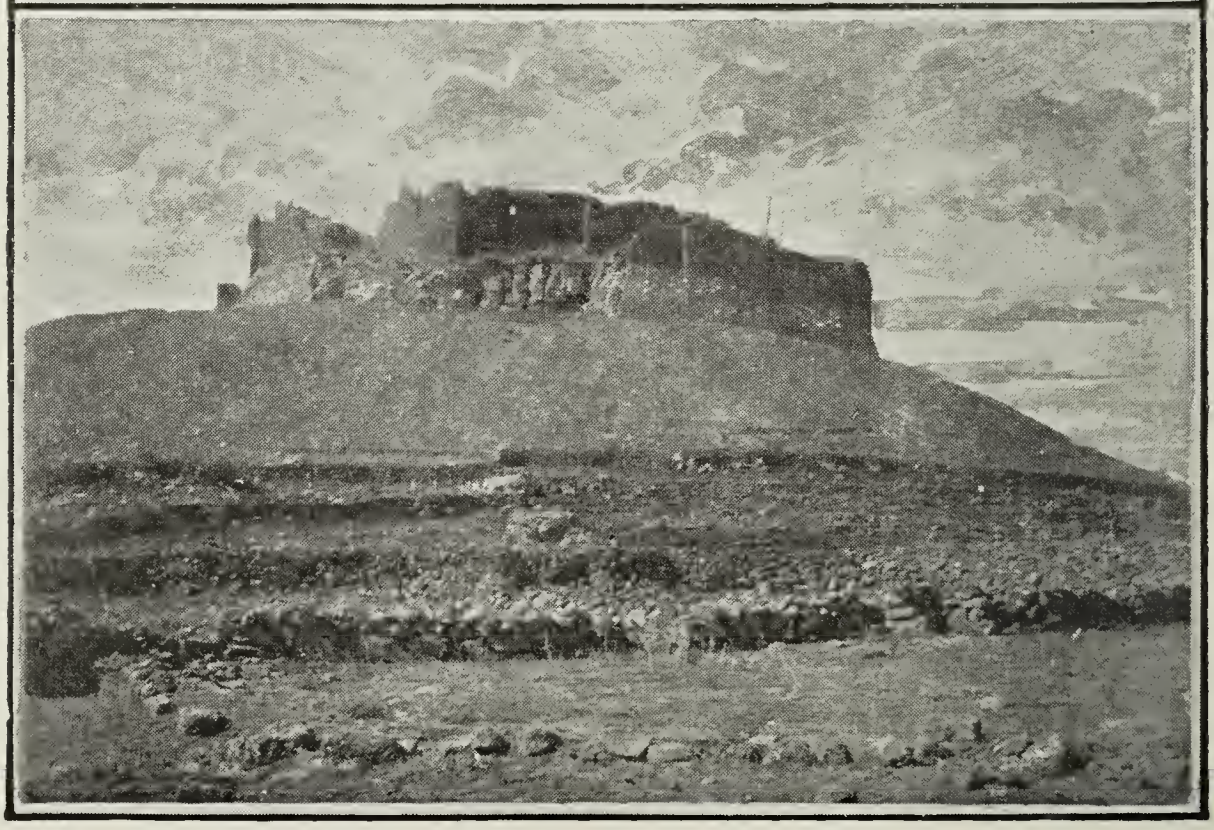
The heat, in the shade, was awful—our thermometer stood at 103° Fahr.—and the



ONE OF THE MANY WELLS FOUND IN THE LAND OF THE PATRIARCHS.

OPENING UP A NEW WELL AT BEERSHEBA.

BRIDGE OVER THE VALLEY, KUNAWAT.



THE OLD CASTLE AT SULKHUD.

desolation and silence appalling. We sat down to lunch, which was quickly partaken of in our anxiety to climb the mountain that, with its fascination, had made us return to it a second time.

I said to our soldier-guide, " There are three of us, one Arab, one American, and one Englishman ; who will be the most clever and reach the mountain-top first ? " During lunch he disappeared, and twenty minutes later came back saying, " Impossible, you cannot ascend the mountain ; the sides are like flour, and every stone you tread on uncertain."

However, we set out, the writer leading the way. Our soldier's words were true, and the climb was hard and dangerous ; but much is accomplished by enthusiasts, and soon I was standing on the summit, calling to my American friend to follow me, which he did, in spite of a narrow ridge along which he had to crawl, and a small abyss which had to be jumped.

The mountain, if such it can be called in English, is only 700 feet high, has precipitous sides of fine sand and marl, among which I found some sulphur and saltpetre, and the top on which we stood was entirely bare of vegetation. All we found on top was a circle of

small stones about fifteen feet in diameter. The descent was more difficult and treacherous than the ascent, but patience, care, and self-control at last landed us by our faithful steeds, who although standing were perspiring freely by reason of the great heat.

Our second visit had satisfied us in one thing, and that was the fact that Jebel Mothera could be climbed, and it was with much satisfaction that we started for the four hours' ride that was to close an interesting but fatiguing day. In my own mind I decided, until more definite and weighty evidence is forthcoming in favour of Jebel Mothera as the death and burial-place of Aaron, that the traditional mountain on the coast of Edom known as Jebel Hauran or Mount Hor must continue to hold its own, and perpetuate the last scene in the life and history of Israel's first high-priest.

Our next point of interest was Kadesh-Barnea, a place so closely connected with the wanderings of the Israelites. The first modern traveller to visit and locate this watering-place was the Rev. J. Rowlands, about 1845. Then it remained unnoticed until revisited and revived by H. C. Trumbull, late editor of the *American Sunday-school Times*, in 1883. Since then few have been the visitors to this oasis in

the wilderness of Zin. We are probably the only Europeans that have revisited Kadesh-Barnea, and we counted it no small privilege to see again and re-establish what we had seen several years before.

At Kadesh-Barnea there are twelve springs of clear, cool water rising at the east end of Wâdy Kadees, which is about two miles long. The water from some of the springs flows down the bed of the valley, causing a green bed of grass on either side of the stream, also giving life and fertility to numerous fig-trees, the fruit of which is eaten by the shepherds who frequent the spot with their flocks of sheep and goats.

This plentiful water supply appealed to us strongly as being more probably the site of Kadesh-Barnea than Ain-el-Weibeh on the edge of the barren Araba, and with this settled in our minds we set out to see some of the ruined cities of the Negeb or south country.

During the next two days we visited many ruined sites of cities and towns that had played important parts in Bible history. One of these was Ziglag, now famous for its six ancient wells, three of which are in use.

Everywhere we went the people were hard at work gathering in their scanty harvest of wheat and barley. The grain, after being pulled up by the roots, was loaded on camels and sent off to the threshing-floor in charge of a small boy or girl. Later this would be trodden out by camels or oxen, and after the grain had been separated from the chaff both would be carried away in huge sacks to be stored until the autumn and winter.

The absence of all buildings as store-houses made us wonder where such quantities of grain were deposited. The difficulty was solved on coming across the store pits of a tribe through whose territory we were passing. Deep holes in the earth, shaped like a bottle and plastered with mud, made very good places in which to deposit the grain. As we looked at these we thought it not unlikely that into some such pit Joseph was put by his brethren, the long neck shape would make it almost impossible for any one to escape without assistance. On the surface these pits are built up with mud clods or stones and then covered with earth, thus making them rainproof.

Twenty-seven days in the wilderness had gone by all too quickly, and we were obliged to make for Jerusalem. We frequently came

across parties of Arab men and women drawing water from the many wells south of Beersheba. We would fain have lingered longer in so primitive a land, but could not.

XI

THE REMAINS OF GIANT BASHAN

"WE can't go; it's forbidden." How many times these unwelcome words have fallen on the ears of expectant travellers bent on going to the country south-east of Damascus known as Jebel Druze, to see the ruins of what are known as the Giant Cities of Bashan. Whether they were built by giants, or got such a name because of the solid work done, it is difficult to decide. Certainly the amount of labour and strength required and put forth to erect such houses and castles of solid stone is worthy of a race of giants, as the reader will gather from the descriptions and photographs in this chapter.

To fix the period during which this country was in its prosperity is difficult; one thing is certain, that the language of the time was Greek, evident from the numerous inscriptions, all in

Greek, that can be seen lying about in all directions, waiting for some one to decipher them.

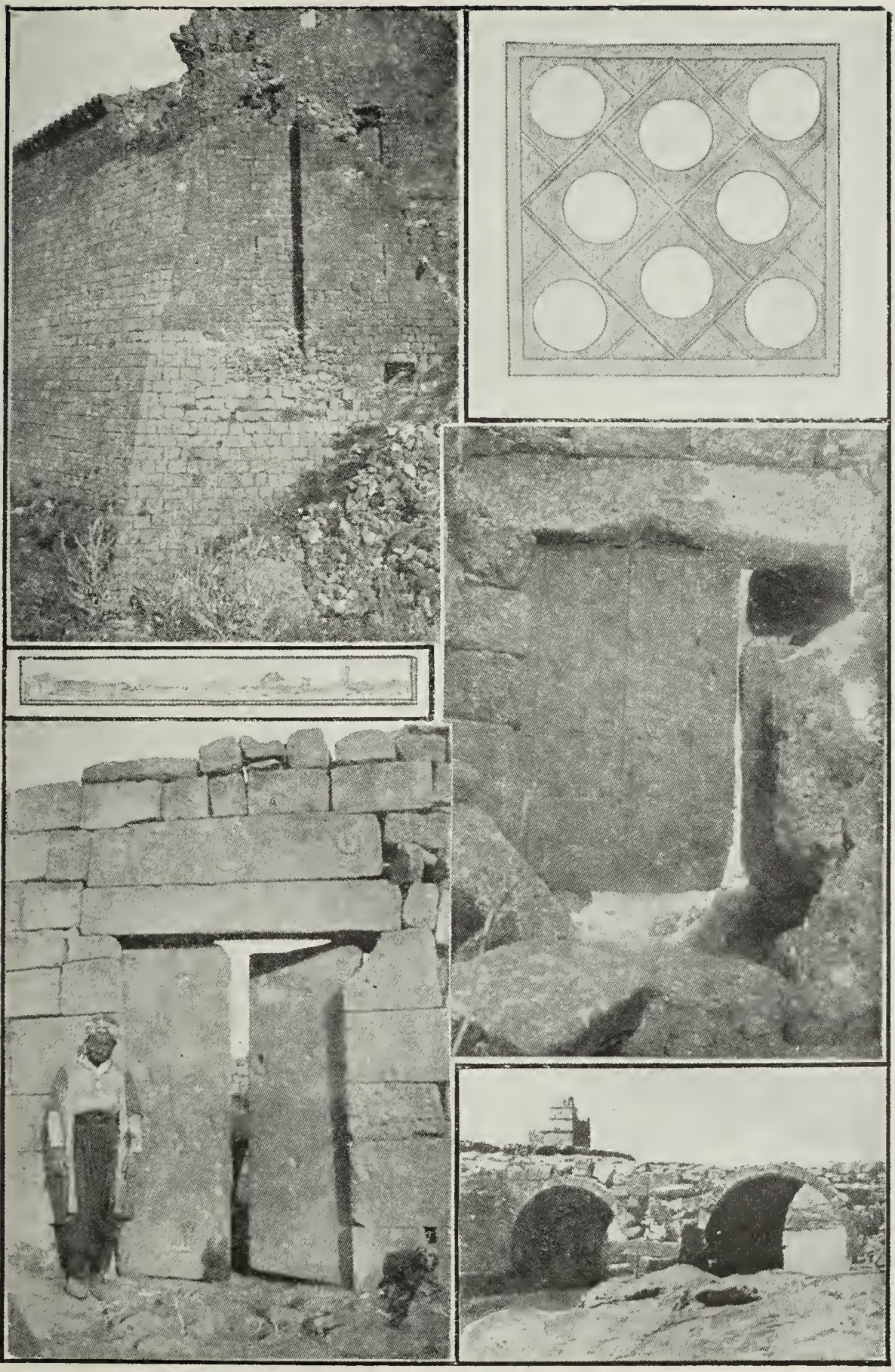
The ancient dwellings of the Jebel Druze form its chief attraction. First among them are the numerous troglodyte dwellings, which certainly belong to hoar antiquity. All the ruins and present-day villages consist of stone houses, well-hewn and admirably fitted. Wood was nowhere used. Each village was provided with one or more towers, most likely used by the people to keep a lookout for the approach of marauding bands of Arabs. All the doors and windows were of stone which turned on their own sockets. I saw some of these still in use. One was 9 feet 8 inches high by 6 feet 4 inches wide and $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick; it took three men to open or close it, and when hit it rang clear like a bell. Some of these doors were finely carved and panelled, and are yet in use. The ceilings consist of long stone slabs, hewn smooth and closely fitted, resting on arches from ten to fifteen feet across.

In the principal towns, such as Swadia, Kunawat, Shobbah and Bozrah, numerous temples and public buildings are to be found, also arches of triumph. The open reservoirs, still used for collecting the rain-water, are triumphs

of the stonemason, and worthy of those who undertook such massive tasks. Everywhere beautifully carved and ornamented sarcophagi abound, in many cases bearing the names of those whose remains they once contained. This, then, is a short description of the forbidden district: why forbidden the Turkish Government only knows, for the people of the land are most hospitable and open to outsiders, as the writer has many times proved.

Now for a few descriptions of some of the principal sights of the place of which I have secured pictures. Beginning at Bozrah, one is surrounded with the remains of triumphal arches, temples, baths, and streets of columns all in fairly good preservation. The fine old castle has been turned into a barracks, and is occupied by Turkish soldiery. This probably belongs to the thirteenth century. But we cannot linger here, but pass on east to Sulkhud, some five hours' ride across rough, stony country, supposed by some to be the same place as mentioned in Deut. iii. 10. Riding through the town we notice fragments of columns, ornamented lintels and finely chased windows all around.

But the traveller will steer straight for the fine old castle standing out so prominently against



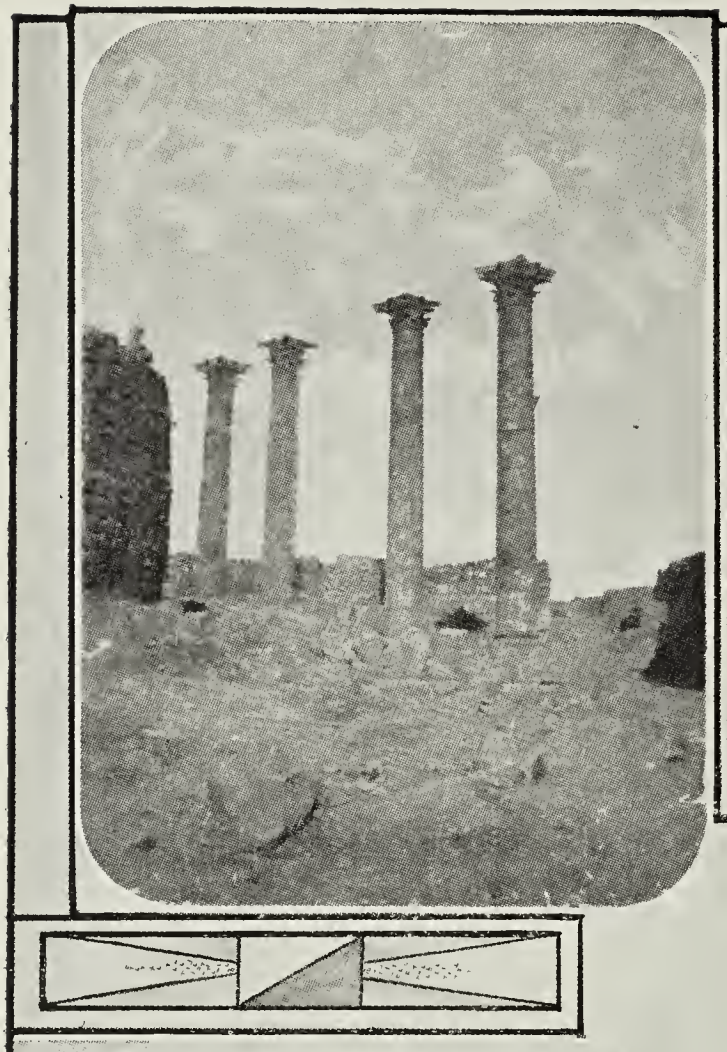
BATTLEMENTS OF SULKHUD.

STONE DOORS AT EL-GHUSM.

CARVED STONE WINDOW.

STONE DOORS AT LYSON.

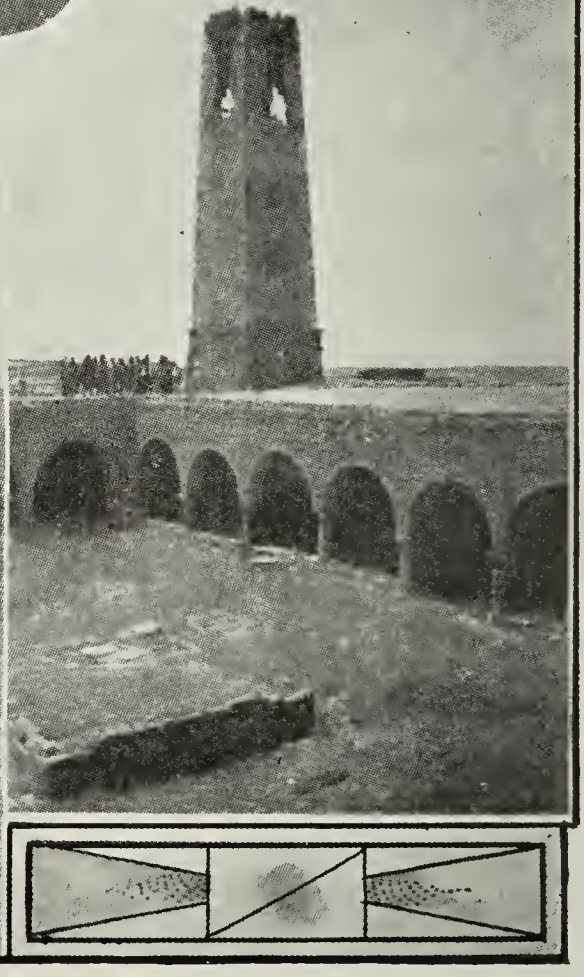
BRIDGE AT KUNAWAT.



STREET OF COLUMNS AT BOSRAH.

A DOUBLE ARCH.

OLD WATERCOURSE NEAR KUNAWAT.



OLD WATCH-TOWER AT ELDERAD.

the sky. After some amount of scrambling and puffing we reach what seems at a distance its base, but find that a deep moat has to be crossed ere the castle is reached. The fact is it is built in the mouth of an extinct crater. The walls of the castle are from eighty to one hundred feet high. The interior is a perfect labyrinth of halls, galleries and vaults, now in a confused and ruined state. Near the gate are two colossal lions, facing each other, and between them a rude representation of a tree. This castle has been thought to belong to the sixth century at about A.D. 560. The fine remaining battlements testify to the strength of the place when complete. A curious old tower claims attention, built of white and black stone in alternate layers, some of the white sections bearing inscriptions in the Cufic characters. From the top of this tower a fine view of the surrounding country is to be had. Towards the west can be seen the old Roman road in a straight line as far as Bozrah.

Looking east, one peers into the deserts of golden sand. But we must away to Kunawat. This is a long day's ride. *En route* we pass numerous ruined towers, built of fine-cut stone and well erected, and placed about a quarter of a mile apart from each other.

But we are nearing Kunawat—the largest and finest of the ruined cities. See this old waterway, made to bring water from a distance of twelve miles, and to-day as good as when the ancients left off their work. It would take a long time to describe all that is to be seen here. Ruined temples, palaces, churches, theatres and houses all around. A deep valley separates the town, but an old bridge still spans the breach and enables the present inhabitants to cross dry-shod, for in winter a strong torrent flows under this substantial structure. The finely carved doors call for special attention. How such work was done makes one marvel. Certainly labour and trouble must have been little thought of in those days. Old water-mills still testify to the ingenuity of the giants of Bashan. The streets are still well paved at places with large slabs of stone. Very noticeable is a ruined church, the vestibule of which was borne by eighteen columns. A beautiful and most elaborately executed central portal, with a cross, leads into the church, which is about twenty-seven yards long. Kunawat might be Kenath of Num. xxxii. 42.

A visit to Shobbah well repays the traveller, if only to gaze on the fine baths almost intact in which the Bashanites used to revel, the water

being brought from a great distance by means of an aqueduct the arches of which are still standing at a height of about thirty feet above ground. Here as elsewhere finely chased capitals tell of magnificent temples and palaces in past times. I have only mentioned some of the principal towns in the district, all inhabited. The whole country abounds in ruins, all of which are worth exploring. Here one sees houses of two and three stories high, the upper chambers reached by means of long stones let into the outer wall, thus forming a staircase.

But enough has been said to show the reader that at some time Bashan must have been a thickly populated land, and the Bashanites housed in substantial dwellings, making use as they did of the only material to hand, and that hard black basalt. The interpretation of the numerous inscriptions would, no doubt, throw much light on the time and builders of the ruins.

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